

The Irish Soccer Split: A Reflection of the Politics of Ireland?

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County Map of Ireland Outlining Irish Football Association (IFA) Divisional Associations



IFA Divisional Associations

North-East: Counties Antrim and Down

Mid-Ulster: Counties Armagh and Tyrone

North-West: County Derry/Londonderry

Leinster: All Twelve Counties of Leinster

Munster: All Six Counties of Munster

Fermanagh and Western: County Fermanagh and some towns within Counties Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim.

Counties Cavan, Monaghan, Mayo, Galway and Roscommon and much of Counties Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim were not affiliated to any divisional association of the IFA.

Glossary of Abbreviations

AAA – Amateur Athletics Association

ASTI – Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland

BLP – British Labour Party

CFA – Cyprus Football Association

ConIFA - Confederation of Independent Football Associations

ESB – Electricity Supply Board

FA – The Football Association

FAI – Football Association of Ireland

FAIFS – Football Association of the Irish Free State

FA of Wales – Football Association of Wales

FFF – French Football Federation

FIFA - Fédération Internationale de Football Association

FIS – Fédération International de Ski

FLN – Algerian National Liberation Front

GAA – Gaelic Athletic Association

IAAF – International Association of Athletics Federations

IABA – Irish Amateur Boxing Association

IBA – Irish Bowling Association

IFA – Irish Football Association

IFAB – International Football Association Board

IHA – Irish Hockey Association

IHU – Irish Hockey Union

ILTA – Irish Lawn Tennis Association

INTO – Irish National Teachers Organisation

IOC – Irish Olympic Council

IOC – International Olympic Committee

IRA – Irish Republican Army

IRFU – Irish Rugby Football Union

ITGWU – Irish Transport and General Workers Union

ITUC – Irish Trades Union Congress

KTFF – Kıbrıs Türk Futbol Federasyonu

LFA – Leinster Football Association
MCUI – Motor Cycle Union of Ireland
MFA – Munster Football Association
NACAI – National Athletic and Cycling Association of Ireland
NAI – National Archives of Ireland
NILP – Northern Ireland Labour Party
PFA – Palestinian Football Association
PR – Proportional Representation
PRONI – Public Records Office of Northern Ireland
RAC – Royal Automobile Club
RDS – Royal Dublin Society
RIAC – Royal Irish Automobile Club
RIC – Royal Irish Constabulary
RUC – Royal Ulster Constabulary
SFA – Scottish Football Association
TRNC – Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
TUC – Trades Union Congress
UCD – University College Dublin
UEFA – Union of European Football Associations
UULA – Ulster Unionist Labour Association
UVF – Ulster Volunteer Force

Abstract

The purpose of the thesis is to ascertain the reasons for the split in Irish soccer.

Chronologically, the thesis covers from the period in the late nineteenth century when soccer was introduced to Ireland, up to 1932, the year of the last significant attempt to bring about re-unity in the sport. The thesis focuses on soccer in Ireland, with a particular geographic emphasis on the two centres of the sport, Belfast and Dublin. It shows how the Irish soccer example compares to other sports in Ireland and how they responded to partition, and it compares the sporting examples with other organisations and their reaction to partition by analysing the political, cultural, economic and societal ramifications of the division of Ireland. The thesis goes beyond the regional and local in offering a global perspective on sporting divisions by offering a transnational comparison of other sporting splits around the world,

The thesis demonstrates the important role that administrative bodies play in shaping sports. It shows the pivotal impact internal politics – the ways that power is shared in an organisation and the way it is affected by relationships between people who work together – has on sports. It scrutinises the governance of sports in Ireland and transnationally, as well as in other organisations and bodies in Ireland. This thesis adds to the expanding historiography on sport and partition mainly through the prism of the Irish soccer split. By focusing on a particular case study, this thesis explores wider societal impacts. By adding to the growing literature on studies of partition away from the purely political treatises, this thesis demonstrates the ambiguities, complexities and fluidity that surrounded the partition of Ireland that does not fit into the simplistic narratives that have coloured the topic in the past. It contributes to research on borderlands by analysing the impact of partition on multiple bodies, not just from a top-down political perspective. This thesis also places emphasis on the interlinking of nation-state actions and people's and organisations' responses to them.

This thesis focuses on four main research questions: How did the political environment contribute to the Irish soccer split? What part did the internal structures within Irish soccer play in fomenting division? How much of a factor was the geography of Ireland in leading to the split? And how unique was the Irish soccer split to other sports in Ireland and around the world?

The thesis contends that the Irish soccer split was caused primarily by deep rooted internal political factors and not the political partition of Ireland. Whilst, there were underlying issues of a national political character that contributed to the split, the main divisions related to internal governance issues.

Introduction

The main focus of the thesis is to ascertain the reasons for the split in Irish soccer that divided one national association into two and mirrored the political division of Ireland following revolution and the partition of the island. It seeks to contribute to a wider understanding of the partition of Ireland by focusing on a particular subject, the split in Irish soccer. Chronologically, the thesis covers from the period in the late nineteenth century when soccer was introduced to Ireland, up to 1932, the year of the last significant attempt to bring about re-unity in the sport. The thesis focuses on soccer in Ireland, with a particular geographic emphasis on the two centres of the sport, Belfast and Dublin. The growth, development and divisions in soccer on the island coincided with the path towards and implementation of political partition between north and south with ‘the existence of two *primate cities*, Dublin and Belfast, each the focus for the crystallization of a nationalism’ at this time,¹ and therefore, presents an important case study on the wider implications of partition. A particular strength of this thesis is to show how the Irish soccer example compares to other sports in Ireland and how they responded to partition, and to compare the sporting examples with other organisations and their reaction to partition by analysing the political, cultural, economic and societal ramifications of the division of Ireland. Finally, by offering a transnational comparison of other sporting splits around the world, the thesis goes beyond the regional and local in offering a global perspective on sporting divisions.

The thesis is an important study in its own right as the most comprehensive study of one of the most controversial episodes in Irish sporting history. It challenges the arguments put forward by historians and sociologists such as Neal Garnham, John Sugden and Alan Bairner, that the soccer split in Ireland is primarily due to the political partition of Ireland.² It demonstrates the important role that administrative bodies play in shaping sports. It shows the pivotal impact internal politics – the ways that power is shared in an organisation and the way it is affected by relationships between people who work together – has on sports. Unlike most recent sport history academic studies that focus on social and cultural histories, this thesis focuses on sporting governance, an area greatly under-researched in Ireland.³ It scrutinises the governance of sports in Ireland and transnationally, as well as in other organisations and bodies in Ireland. By adding to the small but growing literature on studies of partition away from the purely political treatises, this thesis demonstrates the ambiguities, complexities and fluidity that surrounded the partition of Ireland that does not

fit into the simplistic narratives that have coloured the topic in the past. Finally, the thesis contributes to research on borderlands by analysing the impact of partition on multiple bodies, not just from a top-down political perspective. It supports the hypothesis put forward by Paul Readman, Cynthia Radding and Chad Bryant in their global study of borderlands that:

The institutions of empire and colonialism provided just one means by which institutional presences acted in the creation of borderlands. Such presences could be those associated with nation-states as well as empires; they could be those of supra-national entities (such as federations), of local governing institutions, of small social organizations (such as tribal or kinship groups).⁴

The Historiography of Sport and Partition in Ireland

The historiography of sports and partition in Ireland are continuously increasing with many scholars exploring new avenues and angles on both topics. This thesis adds to this expanding historiography on sport and partition mainly through the prism of the Irish soccer split. By focusing on a particular case study, this thesis explores wider societal impacts.

Sports historiography in Ireland was monopolised by studies of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) up until recent times.⁵ Despite soccer being arguably the most popular sport in Ireland, there has been a scarcity in scholarly research on soccer before 2010.⁶ In recent years, there has been a large increase in academic interest in soccer, with three monographs being published on soccer history in Ireland in 2015 alone.⁷ The thesis builds on the book *The Irish Soccer Split*.⁸ Unlike the book, it is a more focused analysis of the split and it adopts a transnational approach to sporting divisions. It also provides a political, social, economic and cultural analysis of the partition of Ireland. *Association Football and Society in Pre-Partition Ireland* by Neal Garnham offers a good overview of the beginnings of soccer in Ireland up until the split. It is more focused on the social and cultural aspects of soccer whereas this thesis is more focused on governance within the sport. Although it deals with the split, its endpoint is just after the split which does not allow for a comprehensive study on the reasons for and maintenance of the split. Garnham's article, 'Football and National Identity in Pre-Great War Ireland', provides a good example of the complexities involved with Irish soccer identities, complexities that mirrored Irish society, north and south.⁹ In *Sport & Ireland: A History*, Paul Rouse looks at how sporting bodies reacted to partition, a

task he argues that was not straightforward, with different sporting bodies responding in different ways.¹⁰ On the reasons for the soccer split, Rouse does not expand on Garnham's argument from a decade earlier, concluding that it 'is difficult to imagine that this split would have occurred without the wider partition of Ireland'.¹¹ Mark Tynan's PhD thesis, 'Association Football and Irish Society During the Inter-War Period, 1918-1939', whilst dealing with the impact of the split in Irish soccer from a southern perspective, is primarily a social and cultural study of the game in the Irish Free State pre-1939.¹² Recent academic works on soccer (such as *The Development of Sport in Donegal 1880-1935* by Conor Curran and *Soccer in Munster: A Social History, 1877-1937* by David Toms) and on other sports (*Rugby in Munster: A Social and Cultural History* by Liam O'Callaghan¹³ and *Sport and Society in Victorian Ireland: The Case of Westmeath* by Tom Hunt¹⁴, for example) offer localised social and cultural histories. This thesis, on top of dealing with social and cultural factors, also provides an institutional and governance history of soccer, making it a unique area of research in Irish sports historiography. It also seeks to challenge the established historical view that soccer simply mirrored and followed the political partition of Ireland.

The study of Ireland's partition, despite its significance as a key moment in modern Irish history, is still a greatly under-researched area. Until recently, most works on partition focused on the high politics of partition. Michael Laffan contends that 'in the past Irish historians have probably been too much inclined to concentrate on political history'.¹⁵ His own major study on partition, *The Partition of Ireland 1911-1925* was just that, a political history of partition.¹⁶ Other works on partition that focus almost exclusively on its political history include *A State Under Siege: The Establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920-1925* by Bryan A. Follis¹⁷, *The History of Partition (1912-1925)* by Denis Gwynn¹⁸, *From Partition to Brexit: The Irish Government and Northern Ireland* by Donnacha Ó Beacháin¹⁹, and *The Border: The Legacy of a Century of Anglo-Irish Politics* by Diarmaid Ferriter.²⁰ O'Beacháin's book spotlights the political dimension of the relationships between north and south. Ferriter's book is a brief synopsis of the politics of almost 100 years of partition. None of these books delve into the social and cultural implications of partition.

Arie M. Dubnov and Laura Robson, in their study of the three major partitions devised by Britain in the twentieth century – Ireland, India and Palestine – observe that 'Initially, the topic [of partition] did not gain the attention of postindependence national historians. Partition, after all, represented a trauma that stood in bleak contrast with

triumphal tales of the creation of homelands and rebirth of nations'.²¹ From the moment of partition and in some cases even beforehand, Irish historical writing was itself partitioned. This trend has persisted with most of the principal Irish history textbooks partitioned into separate chapters and sections dealing with north and south.²² Dermot Keogh's *Twentieth Century Ireland: Revolution and State Building* does not even have a section on Northern Ireland.²³ David Fitzpatrick's *Two Irelands 1912-1939* is a rare example of an integrated study of both jurisdictions.²⁴

When historians have written about the period when Ireland was partitioned, on the one hand, as Robert Lynch argues, 'there has been a tendency to reduce modern Irish history to a teleological biography of the southern nation state, focusing in particular on the growth and inner workings of the nationalist movement, its triumphs and failures, and the conversion experiences of its leaders and adherents'.²⁵ The 1916 Easter Rising, in particular, became 'the focus of a cult or a myth' amongst southern-based historians, with the partition of the island largely ignored.²⁶ Equally, those celebrating the loyalist tradition on the island also ignored partition as well as the overall Anglo-Irish struggle and instead commemorated Ulster unionists' achievements and sacrifices, most notably the Battle of the Somme in the First World War. Bemoaning the simplification of history, Alvin Jackson observed that the 'historical and historiographical legacy is rich and complex, but the legatees squander their inheritance by their very frugality'.²⁷ He also contends that from the moment of Northern Ireland's birth right through to the revival period, historians were not detached outsiders. Their political outlook came through in their works.²⁸ Mary Burgess has shown that historians and geographers whose focus was on Northern Ireland, including M.W. Heslinga, Estyn Evans and A.T.Q. Stewart, contributed to 'a long and complex effort by unionists to manufacture a sense in which the Northern Irish state has always "really" existed'.²⁹ Heslinga argued that 'two nations' have existed in Ireland since the time of the Reformation, pitting the "scoticized" (the northern) part of Ireland against the "anglicized" (southern) part.³⁰ Stewart contended that the historical, archaeological and geographic division of Ireland spanned for centuries and could not be "solved" by twentieth-century contemporary actions, claiming, 'Whatever the "Ulster Question" is in Irish history, it is not the question of partition'.³¹ Unionists embraced this thesis whilst nationalists ignored it. In many ways, these efforts were in response to the 'imagined geography of nationalism (an island "limned by God in water")',³² promoted by historians such as Denis Gywnn and Frank Gallagher.³³

This 'one nation' theory, as well as the defensive need to justify the Irish state's origins and existence, was only effectively challenged by historians in the 1960s, according to Michael Laffan.³⁴ Jackson also contends that those writing about unionist history since the late 1960s offer a more 'diverse range of analysis' than beforehand.³⁵

The onset of the Troubles from the late 1960s posed new challenges for historians. The contemporary political status made historians reluctant to tackle the thorny issue of partition. Margaret O'Callaghan contends that this was due to 'addressing the fundamental issue of partition was seen as potentially justifying the Provisional IRA campaign'.³⁶ Whilst historical revisionists in this period contended that they were challenging the oversimplified and distorted 'one nation' concept, their critics retorted that they were replacing the legitimacy of one form of nationalism (Irish) for another form of nationalism (British/Unionist).³⁷ By doing so, according to Lynch, historians such as Laffan and F.S.L. Lyons 'pre-supposed the existence of two distinct pre-partition national entities in Ireland'.³⁸ Clare O'Halloran, for example, in *Partition and the Limits of Irish Nationalism*, does a good job in identifying the confused and contradictory responses of southern nationalism to partition but promotes the 'two-nation' theory and ignores the complexities on how partition was implemented when she claims 'the 1920 Government of Ireland Act could be said to have simply...made formal a partition which had long been informally accepted'.³⁹ Both 'one-nation' and 'two-nation' proponents have crudely tried to justify the reasons for or against partition without meaningfully tackling the complexities and ambiguities that inform the multiple national identities that exist in Ireland and the way in which partition was implemented. Peter Hart argues that:

We should not write partitionist histories whereby events north and south are treated independently even before the boundary was drawn. This convention eliminates ethnic conflict and counter-revolution from the "Irish" narrative of (normal) national liberation and democracy while reducing the "northern" narrative to a matter of (abnormal) sectarianism.⁴⁰

This thesis, through a study of soccer that is played by people from many backgrounds, contributes to an understanding of the multiple dimensions to national identity on the island. At its core is a comprehensive analysis of the partition of Ireland at the time of the birth of the border, a study that shows through the prism of sport, as Michael Laffan writes, how 'great events affected the lives of ordinary people'.⁴¹

More recently, new studies have questioned the orthodox and simplistic viewpoint that the division was a binary one purely between Irish Catholic nationalists and Ulster Protestant unionists. As Linda Colley succinctly remarks, 'identities are not like hats. Human beings can and do put on several at a time'.⁴² David Miller has written about Ulster Protestants from 1885 to 1920 identifying 'with several overlapping groups which have the appearance of nationalities. They certainly all thought of themselves as Irish, which for them was no more in conflict with also being British than being a Texan is with being an American'. Events drove for them 'to think of themselves as Ulstermen, a designation which they were reluctantly prepared to put forward as a "nationality" if that was a necessary ploy in the game of self-determination they were, perforce, playing'.⁴³ In *Ideology and the Irish Question – Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916*, Paul Bew attempts 'to understand both traditions more comprehensively' by looking at 'the full scope of the actual interaction of Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism' between 1912 and 1916.⁴⁴ Bew skilfully shows that there was not unanimity within unionism nor constitutional nationalism prior to the First World War, and how the marginalisation of moderate strains within both camps was critical in heightening divisions. Whilst recognising the all-Ireland nature of the Irish civil service and the police, and the interactions between nationalists and unionists within these bodies, Bew's scope does not extend beyond the high politics of the era. Other than studies by John McColgan and Martin Maguire, there has been very little analysis completed on how the civil service was impacted by partition.⁴⁵ James Loughlin in *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity since 1885* shows that national identity was 'determined by a process of negotiation conditioned fundamentally by local needs and interests'.⁴⁶ Loughlin later wrote that during the third home rule crisis, Ulster unionist propaganda constructed 'a primordial dimension that defined the north-east as a "national" territory complete with an age-old historical legitimacy', a departure authorised by unionist leaders Edward Carson and Andrew Bonar Law who claimed 'two nations' existed in Ireland.⁴⁷ Ultimately, Loughlin contends that identity and ideologies are dynamic instead of static, and are shaped by events.

Many historians have placed emphasis on the impact of one such event, the First World War, in fundamentally changing the identity dynamic in Ireland. Thomas

Hennessey asserts that a 'fluid sense of national identity' existed before the war where neither Britishness nor Irishness were mutually exclusive identities. For Hennessey, the 'significance of the Great War for Ireland was that it created the circumstances which led to a form of psychological partition which could not have been predicted before the war'.⁴⁸ The year '1916 came to represent a different sort of "magic number" to different types of Irishman', nationalism's Easter Rising pitted starkly against Ulster unionism's Battle of the Somme experience.⁴⁹ This thesis shows how the war impacted on soccer in Ireland too, both from a psychological and administrative perspective. Simplistic perceptions existed for much of the twentieth century on the participation levels of Irishmen, particularly Catholics, during the war. David Fitzpatrick has gone some way to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of the make-up of Ireland's volunteers to the front throughout the war.⁵⁰ From a sporting perspective, the myth of no GAA involvement in the war persisted for decades until recent works by Ross O'Carroll and Dónal McAnallen have demonstrated the considerable numbers that went to the front from its ranks.⁵¹

In the historical writing of partition, the impact on those most affected has been largely omitted until recently. The experiences of northern Catholics, southern Protestants, socialists, and moderate home rulers did not fit into the simplistic narrative of Ulster Protestants versus Irish Catholics. Eamon Phoenix, followed by A.C. Hepburn, were amongst the first historians to analyse the group most negatively affected by partition, northern Catholics.⁵² Ian D'Alton and Ida Milne have recently edited a volume on the experiences of Protestants in the south after the island was partitioned.⁵³ Similarly, the complexity of the Labour movement's involvement with partition has come in for more scrutiny in recent times.⁵⁴ This thesis builds on such works by recognising the complexities involved within Irish identities, complexities reflected in the Irish soccer community, and moves away from narrowing 'Irish identity to a simple for or against duality'.⁵⁵

Ciaran Brady wrote about the development of Irish historiography throughout the twentieth century, going from works emanating primarily from an 'historical establishment' ('an intellectual ancillary to the political establishment') who wrote mainly about 'high political history', to being supplemented by 'innovative developments in historical research' that applied 'the techniques of

economic, sociological and anthropological analysis'. He lauded the advances made in studies on the history of women in Ireland whilst noting the exception of Ireland's Marxist historical tradition still being ignored.⁵⁶ Our understanding of partition has now been augmented by 'bottom up' studies on social, economic, cultural and gender aspects of the division of the island.⁵⁷ For example, *The Irish Border: History, Politics, Culture* edited by Malcolm Anderson and Eberhard Bort in 1999, 'the first book length treatment of the Irish Border' since Heslinga's *The Irish Border as a Cultural Divide from 1962*, provided political, historical, cultural and literary perspectives on the border.⁵⁸ Accounts have been written on particular aspects of partition such as religion (*The Catholic Church and the Foundation of the Northern Irish State* by Mary Harris⁵⁹), education (*The Politics of Irish Education 1920-1965* by Sean Farren⁶⁰) and security (*The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition, 1920-1922* by Robert Lynch⁶¹). More recently, *Partitioned Lives: The Irish Borderlands* by Catherine Nash, Bryonie Reid and Brian Graham looked at 'how the border was brought into being on the ground', 'how it has been experienced by those who have lived' near the border.⁶² Peter Leary in his study on the areas around and at the border, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922-1972*, notes from some studies that there is a 'desire to move away from the traditional dominance of narrowly expressed political concerns', to focus just on the bottom-up experiences. He argues that both are intertwined. The border is 'a site where social, cultural, and everyday history are inextricably embroiled with matters of policy'.⁶³ This thesis also places emphasis on the interlinking of nation-state actions and people's and organisations' responses to them.

Leary also speaks of a recent trend within Irish historiography to incorporate transnational perspectives, an approach adopted in this thesis through its comparison of sporting divisions around the globe to the Irish soccer split.⁶⁴ Readman, Radding and Bryant, in their global study of borderlands, comment on the lack of study of borderlands in Europe, mainly due to the 'long-assumed naturalness of European borders (and thus borderlands), which were seen almost as ontological givens, derived from the physical geography of the continent itself'. This, they argue, is 'a fallacy, of course, all borderlands being human constructions and as such subjective, negotiated, and contested'.⁶⁵ Peter Sahlin in *Boundaries: The Making of*

France and Spain in the Pyrenees, connects the “macroscopic” political and diplomatic histories of France and Spain with the “molecular” history of local communities along the borderland, concluding that ‘these two histories come together, and they can be told as one’.⁶⁶ He argues that even though ‘the Pyrenean frontier of France and Spain is one of the oldest and most stable political boundaries in the world’, it still is alive and contested through the ‘rights of fishermen near Hendaye, the protests of Roussillon wine-growers opposed to the entry of Spanish wines, and disputes over territorial competence in the repression of Basque terrorism’.⁶⁷ Sport offers an avenue to show how politics interacts with the everyday, and how borders, whether of an international or intra-national nature, are negotiated and contested. Andrew Denning in *Skiing Into Modernity: A Cultural and Environmental History* shows that sporting divisions can even arise over topography and terrain.⁶⁸

A key feature of this thesis is to look at the importance of symbolism through the use of anthems, flags and other emblems. Studies of symbolism within Ireland and internationally shows the importance of symbols in constructing and projecting identities within and beyond communities. Ewan Morris has demonstrated in his study on symbolism within Ireland, that sport ‘provides an interesting test case of willingness to compromise on matters of symbolism in the interests of Irish unity’.⁶⁹ Michael Billig refers to the national flag as symbolising ‘the sacred character of the nation’.⁷⁰ He also argues that nations seeking to attain statehood are more likely to conspicuously display symbols than long-established states where symbols are generally more banal.⁷¹ Heather Dichter, in referring to East Germany, looks at how nations assert their ‘sovereignty and gain de facto recognition’ through the ‘promotion of state symbols’ such as flags, anthems and other emblems.⁷² This thesis demonstrates the importance of symbols in post-partition Ireland and how sports organisations played a vital role in projecting identities through the use of flags and anthems.

Ultimately this thesis provides a wider understanding of partition through a detailed analysis on how it was implemented in one sector, soccer. This demonstrates the confused and haphazard nature of its realisation. It does this by showing how matters of state policy impacted on the everyday lives of people and

organisations they were involved in, with a particular emphasis on the people and organisations involved in soccer. It supports Ged Martin's view that the decade from '1912 counted for a great deal' where partition 'developed from temporary exclusion by county to permanent devolution within a wholly new "Statutory Ulster"'.⁷³ It is also worth remembering Michael Hopkinson's point on the fluidity of the 1920 Government of Ireland Bill and in how we analyse history from a rear-view mirror: 'Stances taken at the time were frequently less hard-line than they appeared superficially and retrospective accounts by contemporaries tend to emphasise consistency and dogmatism as opposed to flexibility'.⁷⁴ This thesis shows that there was also enormous fluidity within the Irish soccer community, with the main protagonists regularly projecting efforts at flexibility over dogmatism. By analysing how multiple bodies reacted to the political partition of the island, the thesis demonstrates that many practices remained as before and that the political and legal partition that occurred was not matched by a social and cultural partition.

Research Questions

In order to achieve its aims, the thesis is driven by four research questions which developed out of the initial secondary reading.

1. How did the political environment contribute to division in soccer in Ireland?
2. What part did the internal structures within Irish soccer play in fomenting division?
3. How much of a factor was the geography of Ireland in leading to the Irish soccer split?
4. How unique was the Irish soccer split to other sports and organisations in Ireland and sports around the world?

It has been often asserted that the primary reason for the split in Irish soccer was the political partition of Ireland in 1921, the same year of the soccer split.⁷⁵ This has been the driving and most important question of the thesis: how did the political environment contribute to the Irish soccer split? For this thesis, most of the main political issues analysed are encompassed in the Irish revolutionary decade spanning from 1912 to 1923 covering the third home rule crisis, the First World War, the Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War of Independence and especially the partition of Ireland. The thesis challenges the orthodox

view that partition was pre-determined by irreconcilable differences between unionists and nationalists, and through research on how multiple bodies reacted to partition, it demonstrates the confused nature in how partition was realised. By researching the reaction of local institutions and organisations to partition, an integrative approach is provided to show how decisions from the 'political centre' impacted on the lives of ordinary people.

Throughout the research it is clear that the national political environment played an important role, but not as important as the internal and governance issues within Irish soccer which this thesis contends are at the heart of the reasons leading to the split. This was a sporting split with deep internal roots rather than a split that mirrors the partition of Ireland. Researching internal dynamics within organisations provides a unique avenue to assess decisions arising from the political centre.

Tim Marshall in *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics*, argues that:

Geopolitics looks at the ways in which international affairs can be understood through geographical factors: not just the physical landscape – the natural barriers of mountains or connections of river networks, for example – but also climate, demographics, cultural regions, and access to natural resources. Factors such as these can have an important impact on many different aspects of our civilisation, from political and military strategy to human social development, including language, trade, and religion.⁷⁶

It is in this context that geography has been a central plank in analysing the partition of Ireland. Although no formidable physical barriers separate north from south, the geographic 'otherness' of the north-east of Ireland through religion and identity has been used to explain reasons for the division of the island. Soccer, played and supported in large numbers by Protestants and Catholics, by people from multiple backgrounds and with two main centres of power in Belfast and Dublin, offers not only an avenue to explain geography's significance in creating divisions within the sport, but also an excellent case study on the wider implications of partition.

The final research question, assessing the uniqueness of the Irish soccer split, is important for a number of reasons. It takes the research away from the regional and local by offering a global and transnational perspective. By analysing a multitude of organisations, sporting and non-sporting, a more holistic and fuller picture on the impact of partitions and borderlands is provided. By widening the scope, scale and

location of case studies, an understanding of the reasons for the soccer split is enhanced as well as demonstrating the wider consequences of societal divisions.

Methodology

With the recently acquired Football Association of Ireland (FAI) papers being made available to the University College Dublin (UCD) Archives, I was presented with an opportunity to focus on the split in Irish soccer. My aim was to ascertain reasons for causing the split and the subsequent maintenance of the split through letters, minute book meetings, and debates at annual general meetings. I researched issues relating to the national political environment, internal political factors, religion, identity and geography. My overriding aim was to see how organisations on the ground were shaped and impacted by political events, particularly the political partition of Ireland. I also carried out an analysis of the structures of the association through committee membership make-up from a personnel and geographic basis. My aim here was to determine the importance of inter-governance, geographic and identity issues in the decision-making process of organisations. The main archives within the FAI papers that focused on the split, the relationship with the Irish Football Association (IFA) and with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) were the international minute book, and sub-committee minutes from the protest and appeals and emergency committees. To compliment the research of the FAI papers, I researched a wide range of archives from different viewpoints including the IFA Archive (council minutes, annual general meetings minutes, protest and appeals, emergency and international committee minutes) in Belfast; the Irish Football League Archive (minute book and Belfast & District league minutes) also in Belfast; the Leinster Football Association Papers (minute book) in UCD; the Football Association (council minutes, annual general meeting minutes and international selection committee minutes) in Wembley, London; FIFA Papers (e-mails from FIFA of annual congresses) and the International Football Association Board (IFAB) (annual general meeting minutes accessed online). The IFA papers provided me with a good understanding of the governance make-up of the IFA including the provincial membership of the IFA council and its many sub-committees and the attendance record of committee members. An understanding of the internal make-up within the IFA allowed me to assess viewpoints and motives of people within the organisation more clearly. Many of the archives provided me with only brief information of debates and conversations at meetings

and had to be supplemented with newspaper reports on the areas researched. Again, I was trying to incorporate as many newspapers with differing viewpoints to obtain as clear a picture as possible, Belfast (*Belfast Telegraph*, *Belfast Newsletter*, *Irish News*, *Northern Whig*) and Dublin (*Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, *Sport*, *Freeman's Journal*, *Irish Field*), unionist (*Belfast Telegraph*, *Belfast Newsletter*, *Northern Whig*) and nationalist (*Irish Independent*, *Sport*, *Irish News*, *Freeman's Journal*). My newspaper research focused on accounts of annual general meetings and committee meetings, editorials, and opinion pieces from sports journalists. In researching newspapers, I was conscious of the language used by journalists, the wording they used and the perspective they may have had depending on their newspaper and location. Again, I was looking at how the overall political environment impacted on sports, as well as the part played by factors such as internal politics and geography.

I researched other sporting archives for comparison purposes also, including the GAA Archive, the minute book of the Northern Branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU), the Northern Cricket Union, the Irish Hockey Association (IHA) Papers, the Ulster Ladies' Hockey Union minute book, the Belfast Bowling Club minute book and the Ulster Centre of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland (MCUI). The areas I focused on included debates relating to partition and the relationship between the north and the south as well as committee membership make-up from a personnel and geographic perspective.

My research on other sports in Ireland has placed an emphasis on the governance of those sports and how they reacted to the partitioning of Ireland. Most Irish sport history studies have focused on one sport, with the exception of *Sport & Ireland: A History* by Paul Rouse and *Sport in Ireland, 1600-1840* by James Kelly.⁷⁷ While this thesis is focused on a single sport, soccer, it contextualises soccer within a wide sporting and geographical environment. My research on other sports has incorporated secondary, archival and newspaper sources. It involved me extensively researching on the formation or maintenance of governing bodies on an all-Ireland basis, or not, and reasons cited for those decisions. Doing so allowed me to determine how intertwined national political actions were to the lived experience of people and organisations on the ground. My research on other sporting splits worldwide involved using a wide range of secondary academic literature in trying to obtain as large a sample of jurisdictions to compare with as possible, including analysis of partitioned territories (Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, Korea, Germany)

and within single jurisdictions (Spain, UK, Switzerland). My embracing of multiple archives and newspapers goes beyond the more common single sport focus in Ireland, and also provides a transnational perspective on borders and sport.

As the partitioning of Ireland in 1921 is a key episode of this thesis, I carried out extensive research on the wide-ranging effects of partition, an integrated approach that focused on the political perspective as well as the social, sectarian, cultural, and economic ramifications of partition. There is a huge body of work available on partition that I utilised. This involved me studying many archival (UK National Archives, the Public Records of Northern Ireland (PRONI), the Cabinet Papers of the Stormont Administration, Ernest Blythe Papers, the National Archives of Ireland) and newspaper sources to get a sense on how people and organisations reacted to and adapted to partition. The main question that permeated all of the research was how each organisation and association reacted to partition. In this way, I attempted to move away from looking at partition through a ‘rear-view mirror’ and the simplistic conclusions that derive from such an approach, and to assess the contemporary reactions to partition as it was being realised at that time by a multitude of people and organisations. My research demonstrated that partition was confusing, perceived as temporary by many, unacceptable to some, acceptable to others, and it was still a very novel concept in dealing with disputed territories. There was no real template to work with. This led to many different reactions to partition from a multitude of organisations. The social and cultural reaction differed greatly from the political and legal partition.

Note on Content

Whilst loosely following a chronological approach, the chapters are structured thematically. The first chapter provides an historical overview of partition, particularly of that decade from 1912 which ‘counted for a great deal’.⁷⁸ Chapter Two focuses on the growth of soccer in Ireland, the establishment of governance structures, and the initial signs of division within the sport. Chapter Three focuses on the impact of the wider political environment on soccer by looking at how key events such as the home rule crisis, the First World War, the Easter Rising and the Anglo-Irish War of Independence affected the sport. Chapter Four deals with the split itself in 1921 and its aftermath up to 1932. Chapters Five, Six and Seven offer a wider context to the Irish soccer split by assessing multiple sports and organisations in

Ireland and internationally. The word soccer is used throughout the thesis instead of football. In Ireland, whilst both soccer and football are used frequently to denote the sport, the word football more commonly refers to Gaelic football.

Conclusion

This thesis augments significantly to Irish soccer historiography by adding to the still scant research of the sport in Ireland, through providing a comprehensive analysis on the most defining incident of the sport's history in the country, its division. It adds to Irish sport historiography by focusing on governance and administrative aspects of sports, an area inadequately researched previously. The thesis contributes to sports historiography by moving away from a localised and regional analysis by offering a global and transnational perspective of the effects on sports in divided societies. It enhances Irish historiography by contributing to a wider understanding of the partition of Ireland through an integrative (top-down and bottom-up) analysis on how matters of state policy impacted on the everyday lives of people and organisations they were involved in.

Chapter One – The Partition of Ireland (1885-1925)

Introduction

To ascertain the importance of the national political environment as a factor in causing the Irish soccer split, it is necessary to provide the political context in which decisions were made by soccer administrators. Assessing the key events that led to partition such as the home rule movement, the First World War, the Easter Rising, the Government of Ireland Act 1920, and the Anglo-Irish War of Independence, enhances our understanding of how partition came about and the reaction to partition from different groups at the time. Whilst the thesis in its entirety moves beyond the political treatises that have dominated the topic of partition previously, it is necessary from a contextual perspective to focus this chapter primarily on the high politics of partition. The key issue of identity and the ‘otherness’ of Ulster will be assessed in Chapter Two.

What follows is essentially a synthesis of the secondary literature on partition, with some sections inevitably, narrative-based in approach. This is important for providing a background setting to the analysis which follows in subsequent chapters. The long and complex path towards partition demonstrates that it was not a clean-cut operation, and that it took many proposals, changes, denials, and rejections before it reached a level of permanency in 1925. Given the complexity and confusion surrounding partition, it is far too simplistic to assert that the partition of Ireland was the primary reason for causing the partition in soccer. The piecemeal and lethargic implementation of partition meant there was little consensus on how people and communities responded to it, resulting in a ‘myriad of reactions, counter-reactions, and interactions’ from people and organisations, including those involved in sport and soccer.¹

The Partitioning of Ireland

The Irish question dominated British party politics for over three decades from the moment the British prime minister William Ewart Gladstone converted to the cause of home rule for Ireland in the 1880s. The Irish question did not become the Ulster question during the home rule bills of 1886 and 1893 as both bills were defeated by normal parliamentary procedures. The ‘otherness’ of Ulster was crystallised by unionists in this period, though, and whilst Ulster did not dominate the debates on home rule at the time, it was clear that significant opposition to home rule was centred in Ulster, the only province where unionism acquired a

democratic mandate.² Joseph Chamberlain, a Liberal who became a Liberal Unionist in opposition to Irish home rule, was the first major figure to suggest the partition of Ulster during the first home rule crisis in 1886.³ He said 'Ireland is not a homogenous community – that it consists of two nations'.⁴ Chamberlain floated the concept of 'a federal Britain with a parliament in Belfast' similar to Quebec's relationship to Canada.⁵ There was little support for Chamberlain's proposal at the time and, although Ulster featured more prominently during the debates on the second home rule bill in 1893, the Irish question did not become Ulster-centric until the twentieth century. It is worth noting, as David Miller has, that Ulster Protestants before the end of the nineteenth century thought of themselves as 'Irish', where even elements of affections 'in such gestures as blazoning "Erin-go-Bragh" across the façade of the pavilion of the 1892 Ulster Unionist Convention' were displayed.⁶ Paul Bew contends that Gladstone and Charles Stewart Parnell, the Irish Parliamentary Party leader, made 'a fundamental political error' by not devoting much attention to Ulster unionist opposition to home rule in the 1880s and the 1890s and this played a key role in Ulster unionists 'blocking for over a generation any concession of self-government to any part of Ireland'.⁷

The 'Ulsterisation' of Irish unionism came to the forefront with the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council in 1905.⁸ The exclusion of Ulster from any home rule settlement became the overriding issue of the third home rule bill introduced in 1912. The arithmetic in the House of Commons from the two general elections of 1910 saw the Irish Party hold the balance of power once again for the first time since the 1890s. John Redmond, the Irish Party leader, promised to support a Liberal Government and its Parliament Act which greatly curbed the powers of the House of Lords on the basis that a home rule bill was introduced.⁹ The real prospect of home rule saw a violent reaction from unionists, most vociferously so in Ulster. Edward Carson, the new leader of the Irish Unionist MPs from 21 February 1910, 'hoped to use Ulster Unionist resistance to prevent home rule coming into effect in any part of Ireland'.¹⁰ Partition 'emerged in the form which underlies Irish politics today during a narrow moment in time' according to Ged Martin, the decade from 1912.¹¹ Laffan claims that in 1911, 'Irishmen of all political opinions would have been amazed if they could have foreseen the division of Ireland into two separate states ten years later. There was nothing predestined about the settlements of 1920-1'.¹² It is important to note that

soccer administrators were also responding to these political events that had no inevitability or certainty to them.

The most symbolic gesture of opposition to home rule was the pledge of the Solemn League and Covenant on 'Ulster Day', 28 September 1912 when just under 500,000 men and women signed the covenant.¹³ The pledge signed that day demonstrated to the world, and Britain in particular, Ulster unionists' commitment to resist home rule. Ulster unionists also armed themselves and threatened to establish a provisional government in Ulster if home rule was brought into Ireland.¹⁴ Their open flouting of the law was supported by 'the British Conservative Party, now re-named the Unionist Party and led from 1912 to 1923 by Andrew Bonar Law'.¹⁵ Paul Bew contends that the dynamic within Ulster unionism and constitutional nationalism between 1910 and 1914 was more complex than many historians have suggested. According to intel from a Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) sergeant at an Ulster Unionist Council meeting in May 1913, a majority in attendance were in favour of compromise and dialogue with a large majority voting against the purchase of arms.¹⁶ Moderate Ulster unionists felt ignored by the British Liberal government who never sought their opinion or consulted them in any way, allowing for those who favoured the use of force to increase their hold on events.

The Irish Parliamentary Party also accused the Liberal government of lukewarm support for home rule. According to Ronan Fanning, 'Asquith was always an unwilling ally, a resentful partner in a loveless marriage' with Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party.¹⁷ Senior Liberal figures such as David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill were early advocates of some form of exclusion for Ulster from home rule with both proposing in February 1912 for each county in Ulster to have the right to vote in or out of home rule.¹⁸ Asquith introduced the third home rule bill to the House of Commons on 11 April 1912. No special provision was made for Ulster as Asquith claimed Ireland was 'a nation, not two nations, but one nation'.¹⁹ Although it looked like home rule for the whole island was close at hand, the House of Lords still had a veto for two years, meaning home rule could not be enacted until 1914 at the earliest. The veto gave unionists ample time to spoil the bill, and knowing the Liberal Party's dilemma over Ulster, it soon became apparent that the British government would offer special treatment to Ulster. In June 1912, a Liberal backbencher T.G. Agar-Robartes, tabled an amendment to exclude the four north-eastern counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry and Down from home rule.²⁰ Although his amendment was defeated

by the House of Commons, it was soon supported by unionists as a tactic to stop home rule for all of Ireland. Carson introduced his own amendment to exclude the nine counties of Ulster, still as a 'strategic thrust'.²¹ The amendment nevertheless alarmed southern unionists who realised a drift towards partition was occurring within Ulster unionist and Conservative ranks. Carson, himself a southern unionist from Dublin, was moving away from 'partition as tactic' to 'partition as compromise' and confided in Bonar Law in September 1913 that 'matters were now moving towards a settlement on the basis of six-county exclusion'.²²

Senior leaders within the Liberal Party were convinced home rule could not be enacted without addressing the Ulster question. They just had to convince their allies, the Irish Party. Redmond had recently stated, 'The idea of our agreeing to the partition of our nation is unthinkable'.²³ William O'Brien, leader of another nationalist party, the All-for-Ireland League, believed that had Redmond being more moderate to unionism before 1912 much of the 'sectarian polarization of the 1912-14 epoch' and ultimately partition would have been averted.²⁴ By late 1913, as civil war in Ireland was threatened with unionists and nationalists forming military groups, great pressure was put on Redmond to compromise on Ulster. The Irish Party declared itself open to the concept of the home rule of Ulster within the home rule of Ireland. Carson considered this as totally unacceptable. Asquith then pressured Redmond to agree to a temporary exclusion. In March 1914, Redmond agreed to individual Ulster counties opting for exclusion for a period of six years, after which they would automatically come under the jurisdiction of the Irish Parliament.²⁵ With the concessions agreed by the Irish Party, partition in some form was almost a certainty. What was now alone at issue was 'how much of Ulster and for how long'.²⁶ The British administration in Dublin Castle looked at a number of different options based on counties, rural districts and poor law unions which could have seen the exclusion of roughly five counties of Ulster.²⁷ Redmond was adamant exclusion would be temporary. Carson threatened forceful resistance unless exclusion was permanent. He insisted unionists did not want 'a stay of execution for six years'.²⁸ The unionist reaction angered the British government who were further perturbed by the Curragh 'Mutiny' in March 1914 when officers in the Curragh military camp, under the leadership of Brigadier General Hubert Gough, threatened to resign if they were asked to use force on Ulster to enforce home rule.²⁹ Soon after, the gunrunner Fred Crawford, under orders from the Ulster Unionist

Council, landed 25,000 rifles and three million rounds of ammunition in Larne, Donaghadee and Bangor on the night of 24-25 April. Both incidents made the British government more nervous and more eager to reach a solution. Whilst the British government took no action against Ulster unionists, three people were killed and 30 wounded by British soldiers on Bachelor's Walk in Dublin City Centre on the same day that Irish Volunteers smuggled in arms at the Dublin-seaside village of Howth in July 1914, an incident which had 'major repercussions' for nationalists' relationship with Britain, according to Hepburn.³⁰ As the country spiralled towards civil war, King George V intervened and called a conference of the main parties in Buckingham Palace in July. The conference saw no solution, with Redmond seeking temporary exclusion for counties looking to opt out of home rule and Carson seeking the permanent exclusion of all of Ulster.³¹ According to David Miller, whilst the Ulster Protestant community may have 'essentially won its claim to separate treatment...the pre-war events did not predetermine that there would be a Northern Ireland state such as existed from 1921 to 1972'.³²

Civil war in Ireland was averted by another war, the start of the First World War, according to Asquith a case of, 'cutting off one's head to get rid of a headache'.³³ Once the war started, the government placed home rule on the statute book with two important provisos: home rule would not come into operation until the end of the war and 'special provision must be made for Protestant Ulster'.³⁴ Redmond and the Irish Party supported the war effort but when an opportunity presented itself for Redmond to serve in a National Government cabinet created in 1915, he declined. Bonar Law and Carson accepted and unionists, as a result, 'found themselves at the centre of government; Irish party influence, meanwhile, soon began to dip'.³⁵ From then until 1921-22, British government policy on Ireland was decided by a coalition government, with strong unionist representation. Redmond was accused by some nationalists of agreeing to enlist Irish troops to the British effort without exercising 'sufficient leverage in actually securing the operation of a home rule parliament from the Government' which would have prevented partition.³⁶

The enthusiasm for the war when it started 'obscured the nuances which divided Nationalist and Unionist perspectives on the importance of the conflict' according to Thomas Hennessey.³⁷ For Redmond, 'Irish involvement in the war promised the reward of early Home Rule; while Carson saw an opportunity to strengthen Ulster's case for exclusion'.³⁸ Even though the *Freeman's Journal* in August 1914 spoke of 'a better

feeling...between north and south', Ulster unionists, pointing to superior recruitment numbers from the north, claimed that 'Redmondite imperialism...was a very superficial phenomenon'.³⁹ David Fitzpatrick has shown that whilst more recruits came from Ulster, 'Ulster was remarkable for the enlistment of catholics as well as protestants, of Irish Volunteers as well as Ulster Volunteers'.⁴⁰ Most recruits from Ulster came from Belfast too, who 'were four times as likely to enlist as other Ulstermen'.⁴¹ This was reflected in soccer also, with members of Belfast clubs identifying with Protestantism and Catholicism, all volunteering in big numbers. The decision of Lord Kitchener, British Secretary of State for War, to accede to an Ulster unionist division whilst refusing an Irish one 'did not help in nationalist Ireland wholeheartedly committing to the war effort'.⁴²

According to Hennessey, the First World War increased psychological partition between nationalists and unionists. It:

was the war itself which created the conditions for the rise of Sinn Féin via the suspension of the Home Rule Act for the duration of the war; the war's increasing financial burden; the formation of the Coalition Government; the threat of conscription; and the possibilities it offered to advanced Nationalists to engage in insurrection.⁴³

In the words of Ged Martin, in 1914, 'the Irish factions had been unable to agree. By 1918, they were unable even to talk'.⁴⁴

The fallout from the Easter Rising is seen by many historians as the moment when the 'Irish Party's political fortunes declined dramatically'.⁴⁵ Hepburn claims that the movement the Easter Rising ushered in, 'brought violent revolution and repression, which drove an ever-deeper wedge between the two communities in Belfast and destroyed the constitutional movement across the country'.⁴⁶ For Ulster unionists, their sacrifice at the Battle of the Somme, suffering 5,500 casualties in just two days, just months after the Rising, was in stark contrast to nationalism's 'treachery' on Easter Week.⁴⁷ Other historians have challenged the significance of the Rising. Declan Kiberd believes the 'subsequent victory of Sinn Féin in 1918 was based less on a glorification of Easter week than on a principled opposition among the electorate to conscription of young men into World War I'.⁴⁸ Tom Garvin contends that 'the British caused 1916, the War of Independence and the Civil War by their self-indulgent misrule over a long period; the support for Carson's treason in 1913 and the snubbing of Redmond in 1914 were merely the last straws'. The Easter

Rising 'was a natural result; had there been no Rising at Easter 1916, the anger and frustration of many people would have found violent expression in some other way'.⁴⁹ Notwithstanding the significance of the Rising, the Irish Party, as the main nationalist party up until December 1918, at least nominally, still had opportunities after the Rising to affect a constitutional settlement, solutions that could have limited or even prevented partition.

The first opportunity arose directly from the crisis caused by the Easter Rising. Asquith tasked Lloyd George in the summer of 1916 with initiating negotiations to implement the Home Rule Act 'at the earliest practicable moment'.⁵⁰ Lloyd George negotiated separately with Redmond and Carson, telling the former the exclusion of six counties of Ulster would be temporary, to the latter their exclusion would be permanent. Carson secured the support of the Ulster Unionist Council for the proposals.⁵¹ Despite fierce opposition from nationalists, particularly from clergy members of the Catholic Church and nationalists from what would become border counties in West and South Ulster, Redmond and the leading Irish Party member from Belfast, Joseph Devlin, secured the backing of Ulster nationalists for the proposals.⁵² Once Lloyd George's duplicity was revealed and he informed Redmond that the exclusion of six counties of Ulster would be permanent, Redmond, outmanoeuvred again, rejected the proposals.⁵³ Lloyd George's proposals were also vehemently opposed by southern unionists.⁵⁴ It is important to note as Ged Martin has, 'that although Partition had become increasingly likely by 1916, there was no suggestion of a separate Northern legislature'.⁵⁵ The 1916 attempts were yet another blow for Redmond and the Irish Party. John Dillon, the party's deputy leader, conceded in December 1918 that the 1916 negotiations 'struck a deadly blow at the Irish Party and, since then, (it) has been going downhill at an ever-accelerated pace'.⁵⁶ When the partition proposals were revealed to the public in 1916, they were deeply shocking to nationalist Ireland. Partition 'fundamentally challenged the central map-image of Irish Nationalism in which the island of Ireland was always thought of as the natural "homeland"'. For many, the Irish Party was from thereon in seen as 'merely a wing of the English Liberal party'.⁵⁷

The next time an attempt was made to solve the Irish Question was in 1917 with the formation of the Irish Convention by Lloyd George in July 1917, his effort to

allow Irishmen to 'work out their own salvation'.⁵⁸ According to Diarmaid Ferriter, Carson, had in March 1917 'prepared a plan to tempt Ulster into devolved Irish government, whereby Ulster would be left out of home rule but an all-Ireland council...would consider legislative proposals for the whole of Ireland'.⁵⁹ His plan was shelved for the Irish Convention, though. With the ever-growing Sinn Féin boycotting the conference and Ulster unionists present in body but not in spirit, the Irish Convention was in trouble from the start, 'a gigantic irrelevancy' according to F.S.L. Lyons.⁶⁰ The conference saw the cooperation of the Irish Party with southern unionists, who felt they were abandoned by northern unionists, to preserve themselves. R.B. McDowell, in his study of the convention, considered it 'one of the most striking failures in Irish history...the gaps were too wide, or, to put it another way, the main groups clung too tightly to their prepared positions'.⁶¹ According to Hepburn, whilst the Irish Convention was convening, the British cabinet agreed 'that there should be an all-Ireland parliament, and that the Ulstermen should be asked to say what measures they would wish for their protection'. Horace Plunkett, the chairman of the Irish Convention stated at the time, 'the Ulstermen know perfectly well that partition is no longer possible'.⁶² This clearly demonstrates that partition was not pre-determined by 1918. There was not enough agreement reached at the convention, though, so the British cabinet's proposal was abandoned.

The Irish Convention ended in April 1918, the same month the British government attempted to introduce conscription into Ireland. The Conscription Crisis and the subsequent 'German Plot' arrests by the British of leading Sinn Féin members were in many ways more responsible than the Easter Rising in breaking 'the Irish Party's influence in Ireland irreversibly and, in the process, provide the final proof to Ulster Unionists of Nationalist disloyalty'.⁶³ Although the Irish Party had lost four by-elections in-a-row to Sinn Féin in 1917, the party defeated Sinn Féin three times in succession in by-elections held in early 1918. The 'appalling' timing of the Conscription Crisis and German Plot arrests 'benefitted Sinn Féin electorally'. John Dillon 'thought that, had Lloyd George not raised the conscription issue, "we had Sinn Féin absolutely beaten"'.⁶⁴

The December 1918 General Election, the first since December 1910, was one of the most decisive in Irish history. Sinn Féin obliterated the Irish Party by winning

73 of the 105 seats available in Ireland. The Irish Party won just six seats. Sinn Féin decided to abstain from taking its seats in Westminster, meaning there would be just a handful of Irish nationalist voices heard in the House of Commons as the future of Ireland was decided.⁶⁵ The election was also a spectacular success for Ulster unionists. Of the 37 seats available in the province of Ulster, unionists won 22. In the six counties that would form Northern Ireland, the unionists won 22 of the 29 available, with Sinn Féin winning just three seats.⁶⁶ Whilst three provinces had shown their support for full separation from Britain, it was clear that Ulster was the polar opposite to the other provinces. Remarkably, nationalists had more seats in Ulster than unionists as recently as 1913, seventeen to sixteen.⁶⁷ By 1918, the electorate of Ulster had moved decisively in favour of remaining within the Union. Hepburn argues 'that the main cause of the total and apparently permanent partition between sovereign states that emerged in 1921-2 was...the era of violence provoked by Sinn Féin's 1918 general-election victory'.⁶⁸ Lynch argues that the 'election had hardened the ideological battle lines' and its key implication was:

The crude conclusion drawn by policymakers...that the Ulster unionists and Sinn Féin had become polarised representatives of a more innate ethnic sectarian division; 'more opposed to each other than the Austrian and the Hun'. The fact that the hundreds of Irelands of the past became distilled down to two simplistic identities with their own distinct 'traditions' in two states was the greatest and most divisive element of partition.⁶⁹

Ged Martin contends that the changes within nationalism are more nuanced, 'the upheaval in southern Irish politics may be more apparent than real in relation to Partition. Carson and Redmond had engaged in occasional bouts of pre-War amiability, but these had not led them to agreement'.⁷⁰ Michael Hopkinson shares the view that the dynamic was more complex, and bemoans the tendency for historians 'to emphasise consistency and dogmatism as opposed to flexibility'.⁷¹ The tactics of the Irish Party of compromise and reason had not brought about any tangible results as Devlin, himself testified, 'Each time we conceded anything our position was imperilled amongst our friends and the problem was not correspondingly brought any nearer solution'.⁷²

Ulster unionists were bolstered by the 1918 electoral success of their allies in Britain, the Tories, too. Lloyd George's national coalition was easily re-elected. Most

of the seats in the coalition were won by the Conservatives, though, 339 to 136 seats for Lloyd George's Coalition Liberals.⁷³ Afterwards Lloyd George 'was sensitive to his own vulnerability in the House and felt himself on occasion to be a prisoner of the Coalition'.⁷⁴ This greatly influenced his subsequent decisions on Ireland. With the Conservatives and unionists winning the vast majority of the seats and with no strong nationalist voice remaining in Westminster, 'Tory stranglehold on Irish policy tightened immeasurably'.⁷⁵ According to Michael Laffan, the 1918 General Election saw 'a shift in the Irish balance of power from southern nationalists to northern unionists'.⁷⁶ This was apparent when the decisive Government of Ireland Act was introduced in 1920.

The genesis of the Government of Ireland Act 1920 came in the latter half of 1919 once Lloyd George was no longer constrained from dealing with the Paris Peace Conference that took place for most of the first six months of the year. He set up a committee chaired by Walter Long, a staunch unionist and rabid anti-Sinn Féin cabinet member, to draft a home rule bill.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, the make-up of Long's committee was unionist in outlook. There was no nationalist representation whatsoever, nor were nationalists even consulted. The leading Ulster unionist James Craig and his associates were the only Irishmen consulted by the Long committee during the drafting of the bill.⁷⁸ The committee decided 'to create distinct legislatures for Ulster and the southern provinces linked by a common council, comprising representatives from both'.⁷⁹ According to Nicholas Mansergh, 'the starting point for a settlement was no longer unity, but division. This was to be the new departure'.⁸⁰ This was the first time that the British government proposed a separate parliament for Ulster, where unionists to date had shown nothing but unyielding advocacy to remain within Westminster.

Before the end of the war, the exclusion of Ulster, or at least some of Ulster, was the only option being considered in terms of special treatment for the province. Robert Lynch asserts that by the end of the war that 'the British were leaving was now inevitable. The huge number of contradictory and divisive expectations of what Ireland would become when that happened meant that the final nature of the settlement was anybody's guess'.⁸¹ It is difficult to ascertain when exactly the option of providing a home rule parliament for Ulster was contemplated. The peace treaties

after the war were certainly a factor. The treaties of 'Versailles, Trianon and Saint Germain set new borders throughout central and southern Europe in the wake of the defeat of Germany, the collapse of Czarist Russia, and the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires'.⁸² The creation of a border in Ireland was unusual as it involved the division of one of the victorious countries. Dubnov and Robson contend that historians of Ireland tend to ignore the international dimension of partition and instead explain it 'mainly in terms of the longer local history of Home Rule dating to the mid-nineteenth century'.⁸³ Dubnov and Robson see the partition of Ireland and the ones that followed it as 'a transnational rather than a local phenomenon, a consequence of decolonization and the global upheavals of the interwar era, rather than as an expression of permanently incompatible ethnic or religious identities in benighted areas of the world'.⁸⁴ They conclude that partition 'is not an independent, free-standing "solution" to anything; it is an idea that was invented in very particular circumstances – specifically, by empires trying to extend their lifespans via a carefully calibrated application of some of the characteristics of nation-states in their colonies'.⁸⁵ For Martin, partition 'was a solution dictated by the conjunction within a specific historical moment, the decade 1912-22, of Irish crisis and European war'.⁸⁶ This creation of borders in Ireland, Europe and beyond had huge ramifications for the jurisdictional remit of sporting bodies too, including for sports in Ireland.

The common council proposed in the Government of Ireland Bill was a Council of Ireland to be composed of 20 members from each Parliament to look after 'transport, health, agriculture and similar matters, afterwards working towards unity of the country'.⁸⁷ The committee envisaged that the council would lead to 'the peaceful evolution of a single parliament for all Ireland'.⁸⁸ A degree of unity within the central Irish administration headquartered in Dublin was to be maintained through a common Supreme Court, railway policy and many other all-Ireland functions.⁸⁹ Postal services were also reserved, to be administered by Westminster 'until they could be transferred to an all-Ireland assembly' if Irish unity was realised.⁹⁰ The British government claimed to hope that further common services could be handed over to the council too.⁹¹ Eamon Phoenix contends that the stated aim of the Council of Ireland to unify Ireland was disingenuous 'since the details of

the Bill were drawn up by a largely Conservative Cabinet in close collaboration with Craig and the Ulster Unionists'.⁹²

For Martin, the Government of Ireland Bill 'did not seem to stem from the situation of 1919, for it offered Nationalist Ireland far less than was now demanded, and Ulster far more than it had ever sought'.⁹³ It was an attempt to solve the Ulster question, not the Irish question. Lord Birkenhead, one of the members of the Long Committee, admitted they had no intention of placating Irish nationalists and the bill was in many ways a tactical ploy, otherwise 'I could not even be a party to making the offer'.⁹⁴ The British government was interested only in securing the support of Ulster unionists. Initially, there were many objections from Ulster unionists. They had a particular problem with the area to be included in the Ulster parliament. Ulster unionists sought the six counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone, and not the nine counties of Ulster as this was the maximum area they felt they could dominate without being 'outbred' by Catholics.⁹⁵ The decision of the Ulster Unionist Council was deeply unpopular amongst the 70,000 Protestants of counties Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan who were sacrificed to the southern administration.⁹⁶ Thomas Moles, Westminster MP and IFA council member, explained that the three counties had to be abandoned in order to save the six counties, 'In a sinking ship, with life-boats sufficient for only two-thirds of the ship's company, were all to condemn themselves to death because all could not be saved?'⁹⁷ The decision was decisive in breaking any semblance of unity within unionism throughout Ireland. Ulster unionists outside of the six counties resigned from the Ulster Unionist Council.⁹⁸ Outside of Ulster, southern unionists left the Irish Unionist Alliance and formed the Unionist Anti-Partition League, in opposition to the impending partition of Ireland.⁹⁹

The British government agreed to accede to the Ulster unionists' wishes to confine the northern parliament to six counties only in the spring of 1920, just as the bill was being brought to the House of Commons.¹⁰⁰ The Long Committee's original argument that the nine-county proposal 'will enormously minimise the partition issue...it minimises the division of Ireland on purely religious lines. The two religions would be not unevenly balanced in the Parliament of Northern Ireland' were exactly the reasons why the Ulster Unionist leaders preferred six counties.¹⁰¹ They had no

intention of minimising partition. By conceding to unionists' demands, the British government showed their commitment to Irish unity was illusory.

Even though the Ulster Unionist Council endorsed the Government of Ireland Bill reluctantly, many Ulster unionists eventually 'concluded that the scheme proposed in the Government of Ireland Act would cause the least diminution of their Britishness'.¹⁰² According to David Miller, 'their acceptance of the 1920 Act was a choice of the lesser of two evils, "the creation of Northern Ireland was not the product of the demand of a local Ulster nationalism *à la Basque*"'.¹⁰³ Some, such as James Craig's brother Charles, began to see the great benefits Ulster unionists would garner from having their own parliament, stating the bill 'practically gives us everything that we fought for, everything we armed ourselves for'.¹⁰⁴ Challenging 'the assumption that Partition was virtually inevitable and irreversible at least in the short term', Hopkinson argues that 'there was no inevitability about the precise form of the Government of Ireland Bill nor about the laissez-faire attitude taken by the British Government to the situation in the north-east between June 1920 and the Truce' in July 1921.¹⁰⁵

Once people realised that partition was being attempted with the creation of two parliaments, many commented on the practical implications for such a massive undertaking. In much of the historiography of this period, little attention has been paid to the practicalities of partition, the fears the announcement of partition caused and what its implications would mean for people and organisations, something this thesis goes some way to address. A great deal of confusion surrounded the Government of Ireland Bill. The *Freeman's Journal* described it as a complex problem considering, 'The whole scheme of Irish administration is based on recognition of Ireland as a national entity with its centre in Dublin'.¹⁰⁶ It deridingly named the bill, 'The Dismemberment of Ireland Bill'.¹⁰⁷ The unionist-leaning Dublin Chamber of Commerce also condemned the bill, saying partition would negatively affect banking by restricting the free flow of business and making it more difficult and expensive to collect debt; dual government would mean increased taxation; political differences would be accentuated; the development of the country would be impeded whilst the creation of a second judiciary it saw as totally

unfavourable.¹⁰⁸ One lawyer believed the withdrawal of legal business from most of the Ulster counties would greatly diminish the standing of the Dublin Four Courts.¹⁰⁹

As the Government of Ireland Bill was making its way through parliament, the British Government was waging a war with Sinn Féin and its military wing, the Irish Volunteers (renamed the Irish Republican Army (IRA)). Sinn Féin leaders stuck steadfastly and naively to the view that Ulster would readily come into an All-Ireland parliament once Britain was removed from the island. On top of having its own parliament, Dáil Éireann, Sinn Féin also set up a counter-state with its own legal system, police force and local government. That the Government of Ireland Act 1920 came into law as Britain was at open war with Sinn Féin, who was supported by a considerable majority on the island, shows the total air of unreality that surrounded the act.¹¹⁰

Sinn Féin built on its 1918 General Election mandate by taking control of most of the local authorities in Ireland after the January and June 1920 local elections. The local elections of 1920 were a major disappointment for Ulster unionists, which may explain part of their reasoning in insisting on six instead of nine counties to make up Northern Ireland. It was the first time the proportional representation (PR) system of voting was used in Ireland.¹¹¹ The introduction of PR 'was intended to protect the unionist minority in the south, but it had the added effect of putting unionist domination of Derry and other parts of the north under threat'.¹¹² In the six-county area, nationalists won control of 'Derry City, Fermanagh and Tyrone County Councils, ten urban councils, including Armagh, Omagh, Enniskillen, Newry and Strabane, and thirteen rural councils'.¹¹³ In Belfast Corporation, unionists went from having 52 to 37 members, Labour won thirteen seats, whilst Sinn Féin and the Nationalist Party won five seats each.¹¹⁴ According to Michael Farrell, it was the 'first serious challenge to Unionist hegemony in the area'.¹¹⁵ The 1920 local election results also showed there was fluidity within the electorate of the six counties and not just a binary option between Protestants/unionists and Catholics/nationalists.

By 1920, political violence, ongoing since 1919 in the south and the west of Ireland had started to reach Ulster. The nature of the violence in Ulster was in many ways different to the rest of Ireland, more localised and sectarian in nature. In July, Catholics and Protestant socialists ('rotten prods') were expelled by employees from

the Belfast shipyards and other employers.¹¹⁶ According to the Catholic Protection Committee, a welfare agency, a total of 10,000 men and 1,000 women workers were expelled, about ten per cent of the nationalist population of Belfast.¹¹⁷ The unrest travelled from the workplace to the streets of Belfast, resulting in nineteen dead and many more wounded or homeless within five days.¹¹⁸ As the city was besieged by sectarian violence, the Government of Ireland Bill was still manoeuvring its way through the House of Commons. Devlin summed up the incredulity felt by many nationalists by the British government's insistence in pushing through with the Bill whilst Ireland was in a state of unrest with the vast majority of its people totally opposed to the proposed settlement. He accused the government of not putting 'a single Clause...to safeguard the interests of our people'.¹¹⁹ Bew refers to the period from 1920 to 1923 as 'a period so marked by bloody events and intercommunal atrocity as to render almost impossible any attempt at a relatively dispassionate focus on political and ideological discourse'.¹²⁰

Instead of listening to Devlin or the people he represented, the British government took two steps in late 1920, on the advice of James Craig, that showed the only voices being listened to in Ireland were those of Ulster unionists. Before the Government of Ireland Bill even became law in December 1920, Craig's proposals to commission an official police force, the Specials, just for the area that would become Northern Ireland, as well as the creation of the post of Assistant Under-Secretary for the same area, were granted.¹²¹ The person appointed to the post of Assistant Under-Secretary, Ernest Clark, claimed his appointment was not a preliminary step to partition. In reality, it was a decisive moment in setting up the machinery of a new northern administration, in giving partition tangible form. Clark's work as Assistant Under-Secretary was crucial in creating the structures of a functioning government for Northern Ireland when it came into being in the summer of 1921. He, supported by a small team of no more than twenty, worked tirelessly from his appointment in September 1920 to set up the machinery of a new jurisdiction with very little to work with as he testified, 'I found myself... setting out to form a new "administration" armed only with a table, a chair and an Act of Parliament'.¹²² Future Northern Ireland prime minister Basil Brooke described him as the 'midwife to the new Province of

Ulster'.¹²³ Given the importance of his role in bringing partition into reality, it is surprising he has received such scant attention from historians previously.

The expulsions of workers and the sectarian violence in the north saw Sinn Féin make one of its first decisions directly relating to the north, it started a boycott. Its response to initiate a boycott on businesses in Belfast in many ways increased the likelihood of partition. Many saw it as an anti-partitionist move, a way to show that Northern Ireland could not survive without the rest of Ireland.¹²⁴ Despite opposition from Sinn Féin members such as Ernest Blythe and Countess Constance Markievicz, the Dáil and its cabinet approved the instigation of the boycott. It was in this atmosphere of war, sectarian hatred and boycotts that the Government of Ireland Bill became an Act on 23 December 1920 and elections to the new parliaments were set for the following May.

Many in the civil service which was administered in Dublin were reluctant to move to Belfast, to uproot their families and homes.¹²⁵ George Chester Duggan, a civil servant who moved to Belfast, claimed that everyone in the civil service in Dublin 'seemed to believe that the Government of Ireland Act in its present form would never become law, that something would happen to prevent the partition of Ireland'.¹²⁶ Martin Maguire also asserts:

For the civil service itself 'the nightmare of transfer to Belfast' as it was described in *Red Tape*, the civil service journal, seemed remote. Such was the conviction within the civil service associations that partition would not happen or, if it did, would not work, that they several times repeated their determination that they would remain as all-Ireland associations.¹²⁷

This shows that partition was not considered inevitable by many people at the time, just months before the Northern Ireland parliament convened. Such perceptions are important in determining the influence of the national political environment as a factor in leading to the soccer split.

The breaking up of the Department of Agriculture was particularly bemoaned as it was seen as a great success since its formation 21 years earlier. Two of its functions, fisheries and the administration of the Diseases of Animals Acts, were reserved for the Council of Ireland, though.¹²⁸ The Council of Agriculture had seen close cooperation between unionists and nationalists throughout its existence, as

had other all-Ireland bodies such as the Association of Municipal Authorities where 'Southern *Sinn Feiners* and Northern Unionists' had worked with each other.¹²⁹ The *Freeman's Journal* posed the question, 'Will anyone even adduce a single fact to show that such breaking up is not ruinous from every point of view'?¹³⁰ People envisaged that insurance companies would be affected disastrously by partition. To illustrate the complications that 'the sea of confusion' partition could bring, the *Freeman's Journal* provided a breakdown of health insurance holders in Ireland in April 1921:

There are approximately 750,000 insured persons in Ireland who are members of Approved Societies. Of these about 474,000 reside in Southern Ireland and 276,000 in Northern Ireland. Of the 474,000 who reside in Southern Ireland it is estimated that 357,000 belong to societies with headquarters in Southern Ireland, 13,000 to societies with headquarters in Northern Ireland, and 94,000 to societies in Great Britain. Of the 276,000 who reside in Northern Ireland it is estimated that 119,000 belong to societies with headquarters in Northern Ireland, 50,000 to societies with headquarters in Southern Ireland, and 107,000 to societies with headquarters in Great Britain.¹³¹

Despite the substantial opposition to the Government of Ireland Act 1920, the British government continued with its implementation. The Act came into effect on 3 May 1921. Three weeks later, elections were held for the two parliaments. Although nationalists vehemently opposed the Government of Ireland Act 1920, they still contested the election for the new jurisdiction, Northern Ireland. Áine Ceannt, widow of executed Easter Rising leader Éamonn, disagreed with this decision, claiming that as Dáil Éireann was the only government she recognised, 'no one else, would order a general election', certainly not the British government whip.¹³² Sinn Féin won six seats, the Nationalist Party (an iteration of the Irish Party) also won six, unionists winning the other 40. J.M. Curran contends that, 'Ironically, by participating in the Home Rule elections, Sinn Féin recognised partition and assisted in the establishment of a separate government for the six counties'.¹³³ Indicative of the lack of penetration of Sinn Féin in the north were the profiles of the six people elected under its banner; de Valera, Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Eoin MacNeill, Seán Milroy and Seán O'Mahony. Most of them were high profile figures in the south, with O'Mahony the only one not also elected to a Southern Ireland constituency. The main northerners in Sinn Féin were Eoin MacNeill, Ernest Blythe

and Seán MacEntee. They took 'an interest in the North, but their commitment was to Southern politics, and they were in effect advisers *on* the North rather than spokesmen *for* the North'.¹³⁴ All nationalists abstained from taking their seats in the new Northern Ireland parliament, granting unionists a monopoly on proceedings.¹³⁵ Martin believes it was unfortunate that the Nationalist Party took an 'exclusionist stance enabling the new Northern State to form its institutions without the constructive opposition which had been the philosophical core of the old parliamentary party'.¹³⁶ For the Southern Ireland parliament, not one seat was contested. Sinn Féin secured 124 seats, all of them except for the four seats in Dublin University.¹³⁷ Sinn Féin used the occasion to elect a second Dáil.¹³⁸ Outside of Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland Act 1920 was effectively ignored.

Notwithstanding the fanfare surrounding the occasion of the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament by King George V in June 1921, violence and the threat of violence permeated the new jurisdiction. Whilst hostilities eased in the south after the Truce of 11 July, the birth of Northern Ireland witnessed another wave of intense sectarian violence engulfing Belfast between June and August, resulting in 'the highest number of casualties since the shipyard expulsions of the previous summer'.¹³⁹ It was a contested entity from the moment of its inception, ignored by the Catholic community which comprised one third of the population.

Northern Ireland also had very limited powers. In its first year of existence, Westminster controlled about 88 per cent of Northern Ireland's revenue and 60 per cent of its expenditure.¹⁴⁰ The northern domain had come into existence, but it needed to be equipped with government services. The transfer of services was stalled due to only one of the Irish jurisdictions being operational under the Government of Ireland Act 1920. The British government insisted both Irish governments needed to be in place in order for this to happen, something that was acutely embarrassing for the northern government. It had no control over policing or over its laws. Samuel Watt, permanent secretary to the Northern Ministry of Home Affairs, contended that by delaying the transferring of services, 'the whole of the northern government will prove to be a farce, and that the northern parliament will be nothing more than a debating society, as it will not have the power to legislate on or discuss any matter arising out of the services to be transferred'.¹⁴¹ One of the

main reasons for the delay in the transferring of services was the transformed situation in Ireland by the Truce with Sinn Féin which led to a change of priority on the Irish question for the British government.

By June 1921, Craig and his colleagues had achieved a number of key milestones that they believed had safeguarded their future of not being subservient to a Dublin parliament. The machinery of government was taking shape even without the transfer of services required to give it further shape. Despite the victories, the future of Northern Ireland as an entity was still not certain. This became clear once the British government began its negotiations with Sinn Féin following the Truce in July. Miller claims that the 'new Northern regime was one of the stakes in this game, and northern opinion feared that Westminster would be tempted to sacrifice their independence from the South'.¹⁴² As will be explained later, the Irish soccer split had occurred by this stage and there still was enormous uncertainty over the partition 'solution'.

With the electoral destruction of the Irish Party in 1918, Sinn Féin became the effective voice of Irish nationalism. At this juncture, the partition of Ireland was being enforced. And yet, Sinn Féin had no coherent policy on the issue. Michael Hopkinson contends that the 'Ulster unionist position was aided not only by British neglect but also by the absence of a coherent southern nationalist northern policy'.¹⁴³ Other than the counter-productive Belfast Boycott, the party was devoid of clear strategies to end partition or even deal with it. With the birth of the northern jurisdiction and the Truce of July 1921, it had to finally confront the issue head-on.

In preceding years, Sinn Féin leaders tended to over-emphasise the blame attributed to Britain for causing partition and downplay the real hostility of Ulster unionists to being governed by a Dublin parliament. There seemed a genuine, one that was wholly naïve, belief that if Britain withdrew from Ireland, Ulster unionists would be open to a united Ireland. Éamon De Valera, the Sinn Féin leader, felt that the troubles in Ulster were 'due to British guile and nothing else'.¹⁴⁴ Whilst not holding a monopoly on threatening rhetoric, some of the comments made by Sinn Féin representatives were not conducive to creating a favourable impression amongst the unionist community. De Valera often described Ulster as a 'foreign

garrison' and Ulster unionists were 'not Irish people', if they rejected Sinn Féin solutions 'they would have to go under', if they stood 'in our way to freedom we will clear you out of it'.¹⁴⁵ De Valera modified his views, though, becoming open to accommodating unionists in a federal Ireland externally associated within the British Commonwealth. He moved from a stance of 'Ulster must be coerced if she stood in the way' to one of ruling out the use of force against Ulster by 1921.¹⁴⁶

This more conciliatory approach was evident with de Valera's willingness to meet with Craig in May 1921. Craig wanted an agreement on the border, de Valera an agreement on Irish unity, both as unrealistic as the other. Although no agreement was reached, they both expressed an openness to meet again, which never happened. The meeting also showed that Craig was open to negotiating with Sinn Féin, demonstrating that flexibility existed within Ulster unionism and Sinn Féin. The meeting was supported by Craig's party, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, Ulster farmers and the trading community.¹⁴⁷

Craig was not involved in the talks between de Valera and Lloyd George following the Truce in July, stating 'I'm going to sit on Ulster like a rock'.¹⁴⁸ On 18 July, however, Lloyd George put forward 'five suggestions to Craig and his ministers as to how they might accommodate de Valera's requirement of Irish unity with local autonomy for the north devolved from Dublin'.¹⁴⁹ Craig and his colleagues emphatically rejected them. Even though Lloyd George backed down, it was clear that Northern Ireland's status was still not secure.

De Valera remained adamant that 'we cannot admit the right of the British government to mutilate our country, either in its own interest, or at the call of any section of our population'.¹⁵⁰ Later in the summer he appeared more flexible when he stated 'if the Republic were recognised, he would be in favour of giving each county power to vote itself out of the Republic if it so wished. Otherwise they would be compelled to use force'.¹⁵¹ The one 'certain result' of the county option would have been the gain of counties Tyrone and Fermanagh, both with nationalist majorities, to the south at the expense of the north, something Lord Midleton, the southern unionist leader, 'believed that the Sinn Féin leadership was especially covetous of' and that there would be 'no more trouble' if they were transferred.¹⁵²

During the Treaty negotiations between Sinn Féin and the British government from October to December 1921, the two primary issues discussed were Ulster and the Crown. The Irish were successful in re-opening the Ulster Question, rekindling matters that unionists thought were settled. Lloyd George admitted they had a weaker case on Ulster, stating 'while British soldiers might die for the throne and empire, I do not know who will die for Tyrone and Fermanagh'.¹⁵³ On 17 October, Sinn Féin offered unionists 'the option of joining with the South or of maintaining local autonomy (over an area to be determined by plebiscite) subject to overriding authority from Dublin'.¹⁵⁴ Ivan Gibbons argues that by this move, 'Sinn Féin had...implicitly accepted partition by arguing that the state of Northern Ireland should be subservient to Dublin rather than London'.¹⁵⁵

Once the Irish delegation stated that their allegiance to Crown and Empire was contingent on Ireland's 'essential unity', Lloyd George and others within the British government appeared open to changing Northern Ireland's status if Sinn Féin would accept allegiance to the Crown.¹⁵⁶ Lloyd George tried to pressure Craig to agree to accepting an all-Ireland parliament, stating that 'two dominions in Ireland was impractical and indefensible'. He 'decried the idea of a partition that would involve "cutting the natural circuits of commercial activity", and said that "when such frontiers are established they harden into permanence"'.¹⁵⁷ Lloyd George was unsuccessful. Craig rejected an all-Ireland parliament and instead 'proposed that Northern Ireland should become a dominion "based on 'equality of status' with the South"', a proposal that demonstrated that unionists were flexible on their relationship with the union.¹⁵⁸

Craig had become increasingly wary of Lloyd George since the latter's five suggestions in July of local autonomy for the north within a Dublin parliament. He was aware of Northern Ireland's vulnerability. Lloyd George's overtures in July prompted the northern cabinet to consolidate 'its position as quickly as possible'.¹⁵⁹ Craig protested that without the transfer of services, the northern government was being 'left in mid-air'.¹⁶⁰ As the year progressed, he pressed harder for the transfer of services. Craig had appeared open to co-operating with Sinn Féin earlier in 1921, particularly through the Council of Ireland. One of the first actions of the northern government was to select its 20 members to sit on the council, led by Craig. Craig

also appeared receptive to an all-Ireland council of finance, suggested by Arthur Griffith during the Treaty negotiations. This openness changed, though, once he spoke to hardliners within the British government, Churchill and Birkenhead. The return of Bonar Law, 'an Orangeman and a fanatic', back on to the political scene after an absence, due to ill-health, also added to Craig's resolve.¹⁶¹ Griffith noticed, that, by mid-November, Craig had 'become more intractable as a result of the people he had met here in London'.¹⁶²

Craig refused to concede any ground to Lloyd George and instead won a major victory from the British prime minister. On 5 November, Lloyd George agreed to transfer services to Northern Ireland without the existence of a government in the south. That Lloyd George, the wily negotiator, would grant rather than receive concessions from Craig, suggests his commitment to an all-Ireland solution was not wholly sincere. The Irish delegation were aware that the northern jurisdiction was not fully functioning when the conference began in October. Services being withheld by the British demonstrated that partition could be negotiable, but they appeared unaware on how to use this to their advantage. The significance of services being transferred to the north seemed lost on almost all back in Dublin too.¹⁶³ The main opposition came from the civil service itself in Dublin who tried to prevent the enforced transfer of staff to Belfast. The civil service representative body, the Irish Civil Service Association, took a case to the High Court, further stalling the transfer of staff.¹⁶⁴

With the avenue of reaching a settlement by pressurising Craig now closed, Lloyd George looked to squeeze the Sinn Féin delegation instead. His secretary, Tom Jones, dangled the idea of a Boundary Commission to Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, Sinn Féin's lead negotiators. Collins was against the proposal as 'it sacrificed unity entirely'. Griffith believed there would be benefits to it, writing to de Valera, that the Boundary Commission 'would give us most of Tyrone, Fermanagh, and part of Armagh, Down, etc.'. ¹⁶⁵ Griffith naively interpreted his assurances on the Boundary Commission as a ploy to help Lloyd George secure Irish unity. Instead, his assurances resulted in an animated Lloyd George using them against him as the negotiations reached their conclusion, leading to Griffith and the rest of the Irish delegation signing the Anglo-Irish Treaty on the morning of 6 December. Hepburn

argues that whilst 'Griffith had denounced Redmond for agreeing to partition', he was 'in practice agreeing to far more, and gaining less protection for the northern nationalist minority than the Redmond scheme would have done'.¹⁶⁶

The Anglo-Irish Treaty's main provision relating to Ulster was Article 12. It stipulated that if Northern Ireland opted not to join the Irish Free State, as was its right under the Treaty, the Boundary Commission would determine the border 'in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions'.¹⁶⁷ Central to the problem with the article was its ambiguity. No plebiscite was asked for and the clause was open to a number of different interpretations. According to Martin, 'the Irish lacked the diplomatic experience to demand more precise definition on the criteria for determining the Border, such as had been included in the continental peace treaties'.¹⁶⁸

Ulster unionists were vehemently opposed to the Boundary Commission, despite Craig being one of the first to suggest such a concept during the embryonic stages of the Government of Ireland Bill.¹⁶⁹ It re-opened uncertainty and put Northern Ireland's future in doubt, at least significant parts of it, yet again. An American consul based in Belfast in 1921 commented that 'Ulster unionists awaited ratification of the Treaty "as the condemned might await the hangman's axe"'.¹⁷⁰

Nationalist leaders in the six and 26 counties were overly optimistic, as it would transpire, on the outcomes that would be achieved from this boundary commission, believing many areas in Northern Ireland would be transferred to the Irish Free State.¹⁷¹ Denis Gwynn wrote that the 'suggestion of a Boundary Commission seemed naturally to imply that the Ulster Unionists would not be allowed to retain the full Six-County area if they did refuse to enter the Free State'.¹⁷² Stephen Gwynn, former Irish Party MP and persistent critic of Sinn Féin, believed that if the Dáil ratified the Treaty, 'then it is certain that before long Ulster will fall into its normal place...Almost certainly Ulster will end as a counterpart to Quebec within the Irish Free State'.¹⁷³ The optimism over the Boundary Commission, in many ways, explains the fraction of time devoted to partition (just nine out of the total of 338 pages devoted to the Treaty debates) during the acrimonious Dáil debates over the Treaty.¹⁷⁴ Even de Valera's alternative proposal to the Treaty, Document No. 2, originally included the same clauses on the north as the Treaty.¹⁷⁵

Many nationalists along the border believed their transfer to the Irish Free State was imminent. They were lulled into a false sense of security, believing they could continue to ignore the northern jurisdiction and its institutions. This blurredness over Northern Ireland's status and territory undoubtedly influenced how sports organisations reacted to partition at the time.

Up until 1922, partition was an administrative inconvenience, bearing little impact on the lives of people. The border 'had not yet become a frontier between two mutually antagonistic states'.¹⁷⁶ From 1922, with a new government established in the south, the effects of partition became more apparent. Both Irish governments were 'forced to devote much attention to relations with each other and to the question of the boundary between their two states'.¹⁷⁷ One of the objectives of the Treaty, at least on the British side, was to normalise relations between both Irish jurisdictions. In many ways, the Treaty led to the opposite. The Boundary Commission hung over Northern Ireland. Nationalists felt they could continue to ignore and obstruct the northern jurisdiction, particularly in areas of nationalist majorities. It just added to the vulnerability and paranoia of unionists. Craig claimed to Churchill in May 1922 that the 'Boundary Commission has been at the root of all evil'.¹⁷⁸

The prospect in 1921 of some levels of unionist cooperation with nationalism evaporated, replaced by a siege mentality to protect the north's interests from the south and from those disloyal elements within its territory. Most nationalist-controlled local authorities within Northern Ireland chose a policy of non-recognition of the new jurisdiction. Both Tyrone and Fermanagh county councils declared allegiance to the Dáil on 28 November.¹⁷⁹ Martin asserts that in many ways, the 'Northern regime was revolutionary' as it 'had to establish its authority over a wholly new jurisdiction, including a "West Bank" of obstructive local authorities beyond the Bann which attempted to continue their relations with the government in Dublin'.¹⁸⁰ The northern government decided to act against the 'recalcitrant County Councils', Tyrone and Fermanagh. It suspended both councils, with the police taking over the headquarters in Omagh and Enniskillen and impounding their records.¹⁸¹ In total, 21 nationalist-controlled authorities, including those of Newry, Armagh, Strabane, Cookstown, Downpatrick, Magherafelt and Keady, were suspended by April 1922.¹⁸²

The provisional government, the transitional government for the 26 counties until the Irish Free State officially came into being on 6 December 1922, led by Michael Collins, had the difficult task of trying to prevent a civil war within its own jurisdiction and react to conflict in the northern jurisdiction almost from the very moment of its inception. Collins, 'almost alone amongst the leadership of Sinn Féin, had come to accept the reality of partition and strove to do something to undermine it'.¹⁸³ Lloyd George complained to Churchill, 'we could get Mr Collins to talk about nothing else'.¹⁸⁴ He pursued a dangerous duplicitous path of pursuing peace through pacts with James Craig in January and March of 1922 on the one hand, and sanctioning 'a policy of military activity along and across the border' on the other.¹⁸⁵ The pacts with Craig, although both broken within days, were still noteworthy in some respects. Collins was now considered the spokesperson for northern nationalists, at least by the British. And whilst Craig claimed the pact showed that the Provisional Government accepted partition and the legitimacy of the Belfast government, his 'agreeing to the meetings involved in some sense a recognition that the Dublin government had some say over what occurred north of the border'.¹⁸⁶

The pacts with Craig were in many ways a public front for Collins who by his other actions, sought to destabilise the northern jurisdiction. On top of arming the IRA for engagements in the north, Collins led a policy of non-recognition of the six counties, which caused deep frustration for the British and Northern Irish governments.¹⁸⁷ One of the primary policies of non-recognition involved the payment of salaries of teachers based in Northern Ireland who refused to recognise the six counties ministry of education.¹⁸⁸ The provisional government was also extremely tardy in transferring civil service personnel and files to Belfast. The Department of Agriculture alone 'was unwilling to transfer files covering a long list of topics, including agricultural schools, crop disease, flax, egg marketing, food and drugs legislation, and the establishment files of the transferred staff'.¹⁸⁹ Files from the Land Registry were still not transferred to Northern Ireland by March 1923, leading one civil servant to claim, 'It really is monstrous that this obstruction should continue'.¹⁹⁰ Once Collins was killed in August 1922, a new policy prevailed to recognise the northern government and to discontinue the obstructionist policies.¹⁹¹ According to Donnacha Ó Beacháin, the government memorandum outlining its new

policy on the north 'was, in effect, a lengthy farewell note to the northern nationalist community, who were now urged to fend for themselves'.¹⁹² Clare O'Halloran has written about how, 'the northern minority were seen as a burden on the south arising out of partition and that this burden was increasingly resented'.¹⁹³

Another step by the Free State government in March 1923 had arguably the biggest impact in cementing partition, the imposition of customs duties on imported goods. The creation of a customs barrier was key in translating partition into a reality.¹⁹⁴ The Free State government did so in a bid to achieve fiscal independence from Britain and to generate revenue for the exchequer. It was also an attempt to apply economic pressure on the nascent Northern Ireland jurisdiction. James Craig, and other unionist politicians called for the Free State to postpone for all time a customs barrier. Craig claimed, 'Those in the South who proposed to erect that barrier wall, and not the North, would be responsible for partition. There was no such thing as partition if they had not a Customs barrier between the North and the South'.¹⁹⁵ According to Catherine Nash, Bryonie Reid and Brian Graham in,

Partitioned Lives: The Irish Borderlands:

despite the conventional conceptualization of the Irish border through the lens of the debate on the Boundary Commission and the politics and symbolism of partition, it was the imposition of new regulations and people's responses to them that constituted the border in this period. The political entered everyday life, not through the boundary commission or the ideological ramifications of partition, but through the ways in which the borderlanders came to terms on a mundane, daily basis with the existence of the customs barrier which impeded and constrained their established social and economic networks.¹⁹⁶

The decision to erect customs barriers before the Boundary Commission had convened showed, perhaps, a lack of faith in the commission and made it more difficult to make changes to the border subsequently. Despite this, and the devastating impact the civil war had on the Free State, 'the Irish government had not buried its head regarding the Commission'.¹⁹⁷ The commission met for the first time in November 1924. The work completed by the commission was not revealed for decades due to a leaking of the recommendations by the pro-unionist newspaper the *Morning Post*, in November 1925. Much to the surprise of many nationalists, no large-scale transfers were on offer. In fact, 'a rich portion of East Donegal' was to be transferred to the north. The leaked report recommended the shortening of the

border by 50 miles, transferring 286 square miles to the south and 77 square miles to the north, which would have moved 31,219 people to the Irish Free State and 7,594 in the opposite direction.¹⁹⁸ The Free State 'had never considered the possibility that its territory would be handed back to the north'.¹⁹⁹ The leak caused outrage in Dublin. Realising the danger the crisis posed to the government, W.T. Cosgrave, president of the Free State executive council, dashed over to London to have the report shelved. Craig suggested for the Free State to be relieved of part of the British national debt.²⁰⁰ The Free State government accepted Craig's suggestion and was 'absolved of its responsibility under Article 5 of the Anglo-Irish Treaty to pay the British exchequer ten million pounds a year as its share of the British national debt'.²⁰¹ The border remained as it was, as it is to the present day. The Free State government also agreed to the disbandment of the Council of Ireland, the one tangible avenue that cooperation, perhaps union, could have been forged.²⁰² Craig 'suggested joint meetings of the two governments in Ireland "at an early date" so that both governments could deal with charges brought by one against the other'.²⁰³ Cosgrave agreed but both never met each other again. According to Etain Tannam, for the Free State government, 'there appeared to be little immediate gain to be made from building closer relations with Northern Ireland'. No political party could afford 'to raise nationalist hackles by cooperating with the very group that was accused of tarnishing the nationalist dream'. Only if 'cooperation achieved a united Ireland would such cooperation be a safe bet in fledgling party politics. The chances of such an outcome seemed slim. Hence, cooperation was very limited'.²⁰⁴ The next meeting between the heads of both Irish governments occurred 40 years later when Seán Lemass met Terence O'Neill in 1965. Cosgrave was fooling few people by calling the agreement a 'damn good bargain'.²⁰⁵ The Free State government and its Sinn Féin predecessor had failed politically, just as it had militarily, in preventing partition and unifying the island.

Conclusion

The path to partition was long, uncertain and meandering. It demonstrates that the narrative of partition being an inevitable and pre-determined 'solution' between Ulster unionists and Irish nationalists is too simplistic. The decade from 1912 saw many twists and

turns that brought about partition. That decade 'counted for a great deal'.²⁰⁶ Certainty realistically only arrived in 1925 with the decision to retain the status quo after the Boundary Commission debacle.

Bew, Hopkinson and others have shown that at the time, there was more conflict within unionism and nationalism, and more flexibility outside of their different factions. Many unionists sought reasonable cooperation with nationalists. Sinn Féin was not as dogmatic as some suggest and compromised on many of its key principles, including foregoing its demand for a republic. The British government were open to Northern Ireland being subservient to a Dublin parliament, even after Northern Ireland was operational. The following chapter will also show that peoples' identities were also complex and 'are not like hats. Human beings can and do put on several at a time'.²⁰⁷ By looking at history backwards, the nuances and complexities involved at the time of events are too frequently side-lined, with the complexities and fluidity surrounding partition too readily ignored.

In comparing the partitions of Ireland and India, Kate O'Malley states that the partition of India was 'a sharp, sudden shock in contrast with Ireland'. She argues that 'British administrators had learned from their Irish experience and did not drag out the process, and partition was definitive and was not reviewed afterwards'.²⁰⁸ The narrative above shows that the process of partitioning Ireland was dragged out for years, resulting in great confusion and ambiguity. For many it was merely an administrative inconvenience until tangible form was given to partition with the introduction of customs barriers in 1923. Readman, Radding and Bryant, in their study of borderlands globally, state all borderlands are fluid and dynamic, and 'being human constructions' are 'subjective, negotiated, and contested'.²⁰⁹ Sahlins has shown that even boundaries that are considered old and stable, such as the Pyrenean border between France and Spain, are still alive and contested.²¹⁰ The creation of all borders elicit a 'myriad of reactions, counter-reactions, and interactions'.²¹¹ Given the piecemeal and lengthy implementation of partition in Ireland, all organisations, including sporting ones, responded to it in many different ways. With such uncertainty, the following chapters will argue that it is too simplistic to conclude that the political partition of Ireland was the primary reason for the split in Irish soccer.

Chapter Two – The Growth of Soccer in Ireland (1875-1912)

Introduction

This chapter shows how the game of soccer grew from Belfast and eventually spread elsewhere on the island, up to the first governance split within the sport in 1912. Geography and internal politics are the key themes analysed. Geography as a factor can be viewed through a number of lenses, through the prism of physical terrain, and identity dynamics stemming from ethno-sectarianism and economics. Soccer, almost uniquely headquartered in Belfast, with two main centres of power based in Belfast and Dublin, played and supported by people from multiple backgrounds, shows the importance geography can have as a factor in creating divisions within sport. The soccer example presented here provides another avenue to explore the ‘otherness’ or not of the north-east, thus offering a more complete understanding on the wider implications of partition.

The large growth of soccer in Ireland from 1900 onwards brought the factor of internal politics firmly to the fore. By highlighting the importance of intra-governance decision-making within organisations, it is possible to assess dynamics within organisations (bottom-up) on key national events (top-down), thus providing an integrated approach to significant events within modern Irish history. Here it is shown how the internal structures of soccer governance in Ireland fomented division. As divisional and regional associations within the IFA grew and became more powerful, their relationship with the parent body was affected. As the game spread throughout Ireland, internal issues dominated the relationship between the IFA and its divisional associations. As Leinster threatened the north-east’s dominance from the early 1900s, a number of incidents occurred that highlighted the primacy of internal politics in causing divisions. The first major rift in Irish soccer occurred in 1912 with internal politics being the most decisive factor in causing that split. In essence it was a dispute relating to money.

Through assessing intra-organisational, national and international political affairs, the international sporting political dynamic as a factor in causing the Irish soccer split is clear. The IFA in becoming a founding member of the IFAB and the British Home Championship, and the close links it formed within the international soccer community, were used by the parent body to assert its authority within the game domestically. The international dimension was also prominent during the split of 1912. The IFA, to maintain its

status as the governing body for soccer in Ireland, was reliant on the other soccer associations in the United Kingdom for support. Although the split in 1912 was healed in months, it had ramifications for the more permanent split just nine years later.

Geography

Soccer provides an ideal example to illustrate the geographic dimension of the north-south divide in Ireland. The sport's north-south features mirror many of the society-wide features. There were clear differences on how the game was played and supported north and south and these differences certainly fomented division. However, as in wider society, there were many complexities and fluidity to those differences which challenge simplistic interpretations of the north-south divide.

In *De Valera and the Ulster Question 1917-1973*, John Bowman cites the works of historians and geographers such as A.R. Orme, Isaiah Bowman, N.J.G. Pounds and Arnold Toynbee to highlight the distinctiveness of the north over the south of Ireland. Orme claimed that Ulster became 'the powerful bastion of people whose speech, habits, traditions, unwavering loyalties and resolute Protestantism differed totally from native ways'. Isaiah Bowman wrote of two 'totally unlike nations'. Pounds argued that the ethnic distance between Protestant and Catholic resulted in a 'yawning gulf' and Toynbee wrote of the two communities behaving towards one another 'like oil and vinegar in a salad'.¹ Loughlin describes how loyalists drew on the "evidence" of 'geography and landscape to assert a binary opposition between North and South along a range of indicators – Protestant/Catholic, Saxon/Celt, industrial/agrarian, businesslike/unbusinesslike, energetic/lethargic, law-abiding/lawless'.²

The differences between north and south were accentuated from the mid-1880s as nationalists, supported by the Liberal British prime minister, William Gladstone, sought home rule for Ireland. Unionists, in referring to the recent land war not affecting north-east Ulster, described the region as a 'haven of Anglo-Saxon civilization amid a sea of violent Celtic backwardness'.³ In 1896, Thomas MacKnight, the editor of the unionist-leaning Belfast-based newspaper, the *Northern Whig*, warned 'that there are two antagonistic populations, two different nations on Irish soil' and that 'common citizenship between the two sections of the Irish people' was impossible.⁴ This concept of 'two nations' existing in Ireland evolved in Ulster unionist thinking from the late nineteenth century. Miller talks of

unionists 'creating a new form of nationalism' in 1892 with 'the birth of a new being, the "Ulsterman". His birth was greeted with the provision for him, by an array of publicists, of a unique "character", "heritage" and "destiny"'. Miller also notes that the literature celebrating this 'Ulsterman', appearing mainly from 1913 to 1923, suggests that Ulster unionists only 'adopted the language of nationality when it was necessary to achieve their political goal'.⁵ Hennessey refers to 'a form of British national consciousness' evolving among Irish Protestants by the end of the nineteenth century, but for unionists, their 'Britishness and Irishness were in a constant state of flux'.⁶

Miller has noted that Ulster Protestants 'identified with several overlapping groups which have the appearance of nationalities' from 1885 to 1920. On top of considering themselves Irish and British, they 'were also being driven to think of themselves as Ulstermen'.⁷ To avoid home rule, their Irish identity became more and more supplanted by their British and Ulster ones. In the late nineteenth century, when 'Ulster Protestants in this period spoke of "our country", "our common country" or "our native land" they almost invariably meant *Ireland*'.⁸ By 1912, however, according to Bew, the 'word Irish itself became for some almost a term of abuse'.⁹ Whilst Ulster unionists embraced slogans in the Irish language such as "Erin-go-Bragh" as late as 1892 (see p. 26), by 1912 'nearly all Irish Unionists united in their intense hostility to the cultural nationalism of the Gaelic Revival'.¹⁰ It is interesting to note, though, that 'the language appears to have been stronger in the province of Ulster than in Leinster before the border was drawn'.¹¹ In 1911 3.5 per cent of the population in Leinster could speak Irish, whilst 6.1 per cent in Ulster could.

Martin observes that this argument that 'Ulster had always been in some way different, shaped by "its own geographical personality"' is problematic as 'Ireland is a patchwork of equally distinct areas, each with a unique geographical personality'.¹² Even Estyn Evans, a promoter of the 'two nations' theory, conceded that 'the term "the Two Irelands" is often taken to refer to east and west rather than north and south, and in [Oliver] Cromwell's time it seemed that the Six Counties to be separated from the rest of Ireland were to be those of Connacht and Clare'.¹³ It is hard to disagree with Lynch's observation that there was 'as much difference between Leinster and the west of Ireland in terms of culture, economy, history and language as there was between Ulster and the rest of Ireland'.¹⁴

Whilst unionists had difficulty in highlighting differences between rural Ulster and elsewhere in Ireland, no such difficulties arose in comparing Belfast to the rest of Ireland. Bew claims that the 'religious-ideological gulf between the two communities had its counterpart in a material-economic one', through Derry and especially Belfast.¹⁵ By the late nineteenth century, contemporaries described Belfast as 'a very un-Irish city in a very Irish setting'.¹⁶ A.C. Hepburn explains how Belfast's economic and demographic development throughout the nineteenth century, 'though typical of British industrial cities of the period, was more or less unique in Ireland'.¹⁷ The growth of the cotton, linen and shipbuilding industries made Belfast 'the fastest growing of all the major cities of the United Kingdom' throughout this period.¹⁸ The city 'fed upon its own success, its population encouraging the development of brewing, distilling, milling and...tobacco, while commercial strength was reflected also in a local banking sector'.¹⁹ In 1821, 'Belfast's population was a mere fifth of that of Dublin; in 1911 it was a fifth larger than the southern capital'.²⁰ By contrast, few other towns in Ireland grew in the nineteenth century, with many actually shrinking. The exceptions were towns within Belfast's orbit and 'the shirt-making and port city of Derry'.²¹

Ged Martin also points out that 'the rise of Belfast represented a shift of power within the Protestant community towards Presbyterians who were heavily concentrated in Antrim and Down, the immediate vicinity of Belfast'.²² In 1911, over 95 per cent of Irish Presbyterians lived in Ulster, almost 90 per cent of them in the future Northern Ireland. Adherents of the Church of Ireland were more evenly spread around the island. As a result, Presbyterians had far less of a desire than Episcopalians in going down in an 'all-Ireland shipwreck'.²³

According to James Loughlin, the 'evidence of what the Union could deliver...was etched in the landscape of the north-east, with Belfast as its crowning ornament, a region emblematic of a British Zeitgeist in which ideas of Union, Empire and modernity were interchangeable and mutually reinforcing'.²⁴ Even the architecture was different in the north-east, where a distinctive architecture known as "planter's gothic" influenced the styles of houses and churches there. Commercial buildings were constructed in the city centre of Belfast with the City Hall, completed in 1906, becoming 'the supreme municipal emblem of regional identity'.²⁵ According to Martin, 'on the eve of the Partition decade, Belfast had become a Protestant stronghold with its economic interests which it felt to be incompatible with the rest of Ireland'.²⁶ As a 'nationalist philosophy which asserted that the

essence of Irishness – Gaelic and Catholic’, was growing in much of Ireland, ‘the polar opposite of what Irish...unionists cherished: their Britishness, the Empire, the monarchy and, above all, their Protestantism’ was growing in Ulster.²⁷

Whilst Ulster unionists had no qualms of proudly highlighting the differences between Belfast and the rest of rural Ireland, they were regularly aided by nationalists who also tended to highlight the differences between the ‘Black North’ and the rest of Ireland.²⁸ Stephen Gwynn, Irish Party MP, described Belfast as a city lacking ‘all artistic and historic interest’. Republicans mocked the city’s British identity and its ‘grasping materialism’, in marked contrast to the ‘ruralist conception of the Irish nation, spiritually superior to imperial and industrial Britain, whose negative social impact on Ireland was the bane of cultural Nationalists’.²⁹ Martin believes that ‘North and South were increasingly out of sympathy at least partly because they had always been out of touch’. He provides the example of County Cork where, according to the 1911 census, ‘only one person in 300 had been born in the Ulster counties’. Leading parliamentarian Tim Healy was expressing the views of many in the south when he said he only once visited Belfast ‘and they were the most unhappy twenty-four hours I ever spent’.³⁰ Unlike most other Irish cities, Belfast was a city of migrants. In 1901, only an estimated 39 per cent of the population were born in Belfast. Most migrants came from nearby, from England and Scotland.³¹ The lack of contact made it harder for southern Catholics to understand the real fears held by Ulster unionists that home rule would lead to Catholic dominance ‘in the starkest and most literal sense’. Northern Catholics, according to Miller, found it easier to understand, as for them and northern Protestants, ‘politics remained a zero-sum game’.³² The experience of Protestants interacting with Catholics was vastly different in the north-east to the rest of Ireland, according to Bew. The ‘only interaction some Protestants had with Catholics was when they were their domestic servants’. Catholics did not make the same advances in the north-east into the middle classes from 1861 to 1911 as they did elsewhere in Ireland also.³³

Ulster Protestants determined to defend the province of Ulster were conflicted with the reality that a sizeable proportion of the province consisted of Catholics. No Ulster county was homogeneous in terms of religion. The core of Protestant north-east, counties Antrim (which contained Belfast city) and Down, comprised substantial Catholic enclaves.³⁴ Derry and Armagh were more mixed, and Catholics made up the majority of residents in Tyrone, Fermanagh, Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan, substantially so in the latter three

counties. Ulster unionists' insistence of a geographic similarity to Scotland and its Highlands was greatly diminished when they claimed that six instead of nine counties such be excluded from home rule, thus excluding the county in the province with the most similar landscape to Scotland, Donegal.³⁵ For all its differences, Ulster still lacked 'dramatic precision, and the result was a disparity between geographical and mental boundaries'.³⁶ Martin also highlights that the economic differences between Belfast and the rest of Ireland, a significant factor in causing partition, was 'the by-product of what now seems a transient flowering of Belfast', for 'the massive burst of innovatory growth that created the Belfast economic miracle in the three-quarters of a century before Partition seemed to run dry thereafter'.³⁷

It was in this environment from the late nineteenth century that soccer 'was seeking to establish its identity in Ireland at a time of political development and cultural redefinition'.³⁸ Although examples have come to light of sporadic matches of soccer being played in different locations in Ireland during the 1870s, Belfast and its hinterland was where the game most firmly took root in Ireland.³⁹ Soccer was a big beneficiary of social and economic developments such as regularised working practices, increases in disposable income and urbanisation. Given its industrial strength, these developments were most noticeable in the north-east of Ireland, which became 'the game's heartland in Ireland'.⁴⁰

The man most responsible for the introduction and development of soccer in Ireland was County Down man, John McCredy McAlery, manager of the Irish Tweed House gentleman's outfitters in Belfast.⁴¹ McAlery invited two Scottish soccer teams, Caledonians and Queen's Park, to play an exhibition match in Belfast which took place on 24 October 1878 at the Ulster Cricket Ground, watched by 1,000 spectators.⁴² It was the most high-profile game of soccer played in Ireland up to that point. McAlery, who was treasurer of the Cliftonville Cricket Club, established a soccer team within the club in 1879, based on the rules of the Scottish Football Association (SFA).⁴³ By 1880, four clubs were regularly playing against each other: Cliftonville and Knock in Belfast, Moyola Park in Castledawson, Derry and Banbridge Academy from County Down. Scottish clubs were regular visitors and helped soccer in the north-east of Ireland to gain a solid footing. Clubs like Caledonians, Ardee, Ayr and Portland (from Kilmaronock) were soon either visiting Belfast or receiving teams from Belfast in Scotland.⁴⁴ The Scottish played a huge role in helping the growth of soccer in Ireland, and have contributed far more significantly to the growth of sport around the world

than they have often been credited with.⁴⁵ According to Matthew Taylor, the significant influence of Scottish football during the embryonic years of association football in Ireland can partly be attributed to close 'cultural and socio-economic connections and the relatively short distance between the west of Scotland and the north of Ireland'.⁴⁶ This fits into the narrative promoted by Heslinga that the northerner is more like the Scottish than the southerner.⁴⁷

McAlery was also the driving force behind the founding of the IFA. The formation of the IFA, only the fourth association in the world at that time, was a clear example of following the lead of the associations established in England, Scotland and Wales. The first meeting of the IFA took place on 18 November 1880 in Queen's Hotel in Belfast. In attendance were representatives from Cliftonville FC, Avoniel FC, Distillery FC, Knock FC, Oldpark FC (all Belfast), Moyola Park FC (Castledawson, Derry) and Alexander FC (Limavady, Derry).⁴⁸ Other than bowls, soccer was the main sport in Ireland to be headquartered in Belfast and not Dublin. The geographical foundations of the game in Ireland were significant in terms of perceptions in Ulster and elsewhere. In Ulster there was a sense of pride and superiority in introducing soccer to Ireland. For other areas, Ulster's hegemony was used as tool to damage soccer's reputation.

At the first meeting of the IFA in 1881, the focus was on the new cup competition, the Irish Challenge Cup. The IFA had learned of the importance of a vibrant cup competition from the FA whose growth had been stunted from its establishment in 1863 up until it initiated the FA Challenge Cup in 1871 which spurred the association onto sustained growth thereafter.⁴⁹ Seven teams entered the competition in its inaugural year, all based in the north-east of Ulster.⁵⁰ At the first annual general meeting of the IFA in April 1881, the association had shown good growth trends in Ulster as well as positive finances.⁵¹ Ireland's first international match took place on 18 February 1882 against England at Bloomfield, the ground of Knock football club, in Belfast.⁵² In a preview of the match, the *Freeman's Journal* described it as a meeting of Ulster versus England, a 'semi-international match in Belfast between an association eleven picked from the various local clubs and the English international team', perhaps a pointed comment on the lack of growth of soccer in Ireland outside of Ulster.⁵³ The Irish team consisted of players from just four clubs, all recently founded and all based in Belfast: Cliftonville, Knock, Distillery and Avoniel. Ireland lost by 13-0. A week later Wales was the opposition with another heavy defeat, of 7-1, ensuing. Ireland

did not win any international match for five years until they beat Wales in 1887.⁵⁴ The game in Ireland needed to expand numerically and geographically to become competitive.

It is not surprising that soccer thrived in Belfast before every other location in Ireland. More free time to enjoy sports was offered to employees by the introduction of the Factory and Workshop Acts. Belfast, with its booming shipbuilding and linen industries, had many workers who could enjoy their Saturday afternoons off for the first time from 1874 by going to see a soccer match. Belfast also had a disproportionate number of skilled labourers who had access to more money to spend on leisure activities.⁵⁵ More than three quarters of the Dublin male population were unskilled labourers, meaning less time and money for entertainment.⁵⁶ Wages and working conditions were even worse in Cork where 'building workers, for example, were expected in 1892 to work a six-day, 60 hour week'.⁵⁷ The game, from its beginnings to the start of the twentieth century, was totally dominated by Ulster and particularly Belfast. According to Mike Cronin, the 'whole thrust to have the game established lay within the Unionist population'.⁵⁸ The IFA's first president Major Spencer Chichester, although not particularly interested in politics himself, had close family unionist links. His grandson, James Chichester-Clark, was the second last prime minister of Northern Ireland.⁵⁹ On his death in 1925, the *Belfast Telegraph* claimed McAleery, the IFA's first secretary, was a 'staunch unionist'.⁶⁰ From its inception, many Irish nationalists saw soccer as a unionist preserve.⁶¹ Given its urban and industrial links, soccer had a 'modern progressive image', at odds with that promoted by Gaelic Ireland. Garnham claims that cultural nationalists saw soccer as 'foreign, effeminate, anti-heroic, modernist and commercialised. Administratively it was linked to the imperial centre'.⁶² With the presence of military and police bands at soccer matches, for some 'it was less the games themselves which deserved condemnation than "the surroundings of West Britonism in which they flourish"'.⁶³ Nationalists also highlighted the divided nature of the game in Ulster with exclusively Protestant and Catholics clubs fighting each other in scenes reminiscent of 'South Sea islanders at war'.⁶⁴

Alan Bairner claims that a unique feature of soccer in Ireland was that 'despite its universality', it 'reflected the divisions that existed within Ireland' and consolidated 'sectarian identities'.⁶⁵ Garnham claims the fact that soccer 'attracted men of all religious and political beliefs that presented the sport and its authorities with many of its problems'.⁶⁶ Despite criticism of the game by cultural nationalists, soccer has always been

played and supported in large numbers within Catholic and nationalist communities, particularly so in north-east Ulster. Given soccer's 'almost universal appeal it would have been curious had it made no impact on an emerging Catholic working class' in Belfast.⁶⁷ Reflecting the fluidity within Irish identities before the First World War, for unionists and nationalists, 'soccer had an image, and a reality, that fitted well with their own emergent national identities'. Participation 'within a British context in championships that suggested a parity between the constituent nations of the United Kingdom could satisfy the aspirations of Unionists and Home Rulers alike'.⁶⁸ Garnham notes that in its early days, the IFA looked to reinforce its credentials as Irish in nature through the incorporation of 'the symbolism, imagery and rhetoric of an Irish national identity'. For example, in 1882 the IFA adopted as its emblem a badge designed with a Celtic cross and harp. Footballers from unionist and nationalist backgrounds 'were prepared to display both a conspicuous Irish patriotism, and a measured anti-Englishness. This was not simply a case of slavish colonial imitation and subservience'.⁶⁹ In this way, the IFA mirrored wider society in the complex and various identities people and organisations held.

Despite its appeal to people from multiple backgrounds, soccer experienced stunted growth during the 1880s. Mainly confined to Belfast and its surrounding areas, there were just 33 clubs affiliated to the IFA by 1886.⁷⁰ By contrast, the FA had a membership of over 1,000 clubs by the mid-1880s and in central Scotland alone, there were over 500 clubs by 1890.⁷¹ The IFA organised exhibition matches to help grow the sport in other areas, mainly limited to Ulster, though, in its early years. For example, the IFA Council in 1881 decided to organise exhibition matches in Limavady, Derry and Strabane, Tyrone.⁷² By 1890, the sport had gained in popularity with 124 clubs affiliated to the IFA by that stage.⁷³ An increased demand for additional fixtures saw the IFA establishing the Irish Football League in 1890. Seven clubs from Belfast and one from Armagh, Milford, competed in the first season.⁷⁴

By that stage, soccer had started to make solid if not spectacular growth in Dublin. The first known soccer club formed in Dublin was the Dublin Association Football Club in October 1883, three years after the founding of the IFA.⁷⁵ It was initially difficult for the club to find opposition to play against. With fewer workers available for leisure activities than in Belfast, the growth of soccer in Dublin was reliant on immigrants from England, Scotland and Belfast as well as the British Army and educational institutions. One of the first clubs the Dublin Association Football Club played against was the Belfast Athletics club. Soon after

Trinity College Dublin formed another club based in Dublin, the Dublin University Football Club.⁷⁶ McAlerly, in his secretary's report at the IFA Annual General Meeting of 1884, claimed 'the South has been invaded...thanks to the intelligent action of this association and the energy of some few gentlemen in the city'.⁷⁷ Due to the growth of the game in Dublin, the IFA held an inter-provincial match between Ulster and Leinster for the first time in 1885.⁷⁸ The initiation of inter-provincial matches allowed for Leinster players to compare themselves against Ulster's best and opened the door for international selection. Between 1885 and 1891, nine players from Dublin University Football Club played for Ireland.⁷⁹

Garnham contends that there were 'fundamental sporting differences as the game was perceived and played in Dublin and Belfast'.⁸⁰ In Belfast:

The role of the individual migrant and the evangelistic convert seem to have been crucial. The influx especially of Scottish workers gave association football there not only a decided fillip, but also perhaps something of a plebeian edge that it acquired only later elsewhere. In Dublin, the sport's other main stronghold in Ireland, the role of the public schoolboy, who developed into the university student, was crucial. The result was, to some extent, an initial perception of association football in the capital as an elitist concern. Elsewhere in the country, most notably in Munster, a lead was offered by the military.⁸¹

As well as Trinity College Dublin, clubs were formed in schools such as St. Vincent's College in Castleknock, Dublin and Clongowes Wood in Kildare. St. Vincent's College provided many of the players of a new club formed in the capital in 1890, Bohemians.⁸² Other schools in Dublin to form soccer clubs included St. Helen's, Montpelier, Chapelizod and Terenure. In Athlone, Ranelagh School was one of the early proponents of soccer.⁸³ Intermediate schools, the Diocesan School and Primrose Grange were amongst the first advocates of soccer in Sligo.⁸⁴ Many Irish boys travelled each year to English public schools and upon their return helped to spread the growth of soccer, including Thomas Kirkwood Hackett who became a founding member of the Leinster Football Association (LFA) in 1892.⁸⁵

The British army also played a large part in expanding the game of soccer in Ireland, and again particularly outside the northern region. Michael Cusack, the founder of the GAA, commented in 1896 that soccer players came to 'learn their game by fagging the ball for soldiers in the [Phoenix] Park' in Dublin.⁸⁶ On the same day the GAA was founded in Thurles, 1 November 1884, the Dublin Association Football Club played against a team from the 71st Regiment of the British Army in

Sandymount.⁸⁷ Most of the opposition for Athlone Town in its early years were from the British Army. Soccer led to 'considerable interaction' between the rank-and-file soldiers and the middle and lower classes of Athlone.⁸⁸ One of the first ever soccer matches played in Munster was in November 1879 between teams from the 7th Hussars and the 15th Regiment held in Tipperary Barracks.⁸⁹ Soon afterwards civilian clubs in Tipperary were playing against Army regiments. The first recorded game of soccer in Kerry was between the Durham Light Infantry Regiment stationed in Tralee and the employees of the Commercial Cable Company in Waterville in 1894.⁹⁰

Soccer also had less competition from other sports in Belfast than it did in other parts of Ireland. Rugby had been played in Dublin from the 1850s, only arriving in Belfast by the late 1860s.⁹¹ By 1880, the year of the IFA's birth, there were 90 rugby clubs in Ireland, twelve in Belfast. By 1884, this had been reduced to three in Belfast, a reflection of the popularity soccer was gaining during that period. The southern provinces also faced a far greater threat from the newly formed GAA which quickly spread throughout Ireland, least so in Ulster, particularly in the northern half of the province.⁹² The GAA stunted the growth of soccer outside of the north-east, particularly in its heartland of Munster. The GAA claimed 'there was not so much as a soccer ball...in Cork County' courtesy of the GAA imposed bans on foreign games. By 1907 there were 270 GAA clubs in Munster, just ten affiliated to the IFA.⁹³ Some of the problems the GAA in Ulster faced included 'opposition to Sunday games by the clergy of the Catholic Church and Sabbatarians, the refusal of the Great Northern Railway to facilitate the GAA, and competition with soccer'.⁹⁴ There was undoubtedly large differences in how the game developed in the north than it did elsewhere in Ireland.

The formation of the LFA in 1892 by a number of clubs in Leinster allowed the game to grow considerably in the province by providing clear structures and regular competitions. The move was welcomed by the IFA 'which was only too willing to encourage the growth of soccer clubs in Ireland in general and Leinster in particular, and it donated £50 to help with the financial side of setting up the association'.⁹⁵ The birth of the LFA led to a large growth of the game in Dublin and other areas in Leinster such as Athlone, Kilkenny and Dundalk.⁹⁶ Soon after, Leinster clubs were becoming more competitive, particularly in the Irish Cup. Bohemians reached the

Irish Cup final in 1895 and 1900, Freebooters in 1901. The arrival of Shelbourne Football Club in 1895 to challenge Bohemians' dominance in Dublin contributed to an equalling of standards between Leinster and Ulster.⁹⁷

Despite the strides made, Leinster still lagged considerably behind Ulster in every area. Other than Gordon Highlanders in 1890 (the only military team to win the Irish Cup), Ulster teams made up all the winners of the Irish Cup up to 1900. The Irish Football League has only ever seen winners from Ulster. Ulster's acceptance of professionalism a full decade before it was introduced into Leinster also contributed to a gulf in standards. The IFA legalised professionalism in 1894, the LFA didn't do so until 1905.⁹⁸ Professionalism was slow to take off in Ireland. Of the 199 clubs affiliated to the IFA in 1901/02 only seven per cent of them had professionals. All of the 'twenty-eight clubs employing professionals whose geographical situation is readily identifiable were located in the province of Ulster'.⁹⁹ By the outbreak of the First World War, only one professional club existed outside of Ulster, Shelbourne from Dublin. Belfast also benefited from ready-made players moving over from England and Scotland to gain work in the city's shipyards. By 1900, around one fifth of the professional players in Ireland had been born in England or Scotland.¹⁰⁰ The geographic nature of professionalism in Ireland in some ways reflected the north-south divide caused by professionalism in rugby and soccer in England. The question of amateurism led to a civil war within rugby in England in the 1890s when the professional Northern Rugby Football Union was formed, splitting from the amateur Rugby Football Union.¹⁰¹ The issue of professionalism also saw many clubs in soccer based in London and the south-east of England secede temporarily from the FA.¹⁰² For many cultural nationalists in Ireland, professional soccer was yet another example of the 'grasping materialism' of 'the unpatriotic Protestants from the north of Ireland'.¹⁰³

The IFA granted each regional division a lot of autonomy on introducing professionalism, the North West introducing it in 1902 followed three years later by Leinster.¹⁰⁴ Clear differences emerged between the 'amateur' LFA and the 'professional' IFA which caused some incidents. The LFA disagreed with the IFA's ruling on Richmond Rovers' (a club from Rathmines in Dublin) fielding a professional player, M. Bruton, in 1902. The IFA ceded to Richmond Rovers' request to play

Bruton as an amateur. The LFA ruled that as it was an amateur body, unlike the IFA, Bruton was not allowed to play for Richmond Rovers. This led directly to an LFA committee member, J.M. Duggan, proposing that the LFA leave the IFA.¹⁰⁵ There was a tied vote and it took the casting vote of the chairman (J. McConnell) to ensure that the LFA remained within the IFA fold. Richmond Rovers' attempt to introduce professionalism in Leinster at the AGM of 1902 was defeated by the LFA members.¹⁰⁶ Months later the Leinster Committee took great exception to the decision of the IFA Council to delete the word 'Amateur' from the rulebook of the LFA.¹⁰⁷ The IFA accepted the LFA's right to remain an amateur organisation, insisting, though, that Leinster would have to accept dealings with professional players and clubs considering the IFA had legalised professionalism.¹⁰⁸

Leinster's eventual acceptance of professionalism in 1905 led to almost immediate rewards on the field, when its first professional club, Shelbourne became the first Dublin team to win the coveted Irish Cup in 1906, defeating Belfast Celtic 2-0 in the final in Dublin. That success was followed two years later by the first all Dublin final when Bohemians defeated Shelbourne 3-1 in a replayed final, also held in Dublin. Shelbourne defeated Bohemians in another all Dublin final in 1911, winning by 2-1 in another replayed final. These were the only three occasions when the Irish Cup was won by teams from Leinster from its inauguration in 1881 prior to the First World War. Dublin teams Bohemians and Shelbourne joined the Irish Football League at the beginning of the twentieth century, Bohemians in 1901 and Shelbourne in 1903.¹⁰⁹ Although neither team won an Irish League title, the experience of playing teams from Ulster on a weekly basis stood to both teams, and helped immeasurably in bridging the gap in standards between the two provinces. The annual inter-provincial matches started to reflect this with Leinster, on the back of some drawn fixtures, finally recorded its first victory against Ulster in 1909 by 3-0.

As the game spread throughout Ireland, the IFA faced a significant challenge in governing the sport for the whole island. The further away from Belfast, the less attention the IFA gave to a region, as many in Munster and Connacht contended. Unlike Leinster, Munster and Connacht did not experience significant growth during this decade. Although there were 43 Munster clubs affiliated to the IFA by 1910, a year later this had been reduced to just 30.¹¹⁰ Compared to other regions, there was

a disproportionately high number of British Army clubs in Munster. Cork's representation in the new Munster Football Association (MFA) comprised of a large contingent of army and navy teams based in Cork including Royal Engineers, 6th Provisional Battalion from Fermoy, HMS *Black Prince*, RE Camden, and the Army Service Corps.¹¹¹ In 1910, the majority of the teams in the top two divisions of the Munster League were military teams.¹¹² Many of the MFA's representatives on the IFA council were from the army, too.¹¹³ The province's reliance on the British Army was discouraging for many locals, drawing them to rugby and Gaelic games instead. According to Garnham, there was a complex relationship between the military and local populations. On the one hand a military presence helped local economies but locals complained that soldiers were prone to 'get noisy in a pub or try to lure a girl under a hedge'.¹¹⁴

The GAA's campaign to ban 'foreign games' also had a negative impact on the growth of soccer in Munster.¹¹⁵ Whilst there were only a small number of clubs affiliated to the IFA in Munster, by contrast, there were 270 GAA clubs in the province in 1907.¹¹⁶ J.J. Walsh, chairman of the Cork GAA County Board during the 1900s, Sinn Féin TD, cabinet minister in the first Free State government, and someone trenchantly opposed to 'foreign games', in his autobiography, explained the effects the GAA's campaign had on sports such as soccer:

With this intensely organised instrument, war was declared on foreign games which were made to feel the shock so heavily that, one by one, Soccer and Rugby Clubs began to disappear. In a few years there was not as much as a Soccer ball, outside the British garrison, in Cork County...and only one or two Rugby Clubs, already in a groggy condition.¹¹⁷

Newspapers also ascertained that the IFA did little to nurture the growth of the game in Munster. One journalist wrote in 1906:

Last week I drew attention to the grant of £50 by the IFA to the Fermanagh and Tyrone Association, and criticised the neglect at the same time of the parent body of an equally deserving branch, the Munster Football Assoc., who since their formation has had to struggle hard for existence. Matters are even worse than I thought, and with the exception of a paltry £10 in 1903-4 the IFA has left the Southerners to their own mercy.¹¹⁸

After the MFA was founded by clubs in Munster in 1901, the IFA Finance Committee discussed a motion at a meeting to grant the new body 'a grant equal to the amount sent in affiliation fees. This gesture...was however given short shrift by those

present. When put to a vote, the motion was defeated, seven votes for with twelve against'.¹¹⁹ The history of the IFA's relationship with the MFA up until the start of the First World War showed most applications for grants being denied, deferred or passed on to different sub-committees.¹²⁰ For example, the IFA denied a motion in 1913 to grant the Munster body a grant of £20. Yet, the same council had no problem in granting £25 to a council member, G.M. Small, for a testimonial in his honour at the very next council meeting.¹²¹ The IFA's reluctance to promote the game in Munster could in some ways be explained by 'the MFA's own occasionally less than stellar performance in engaging with the national body. For instance, the MFA...sought an interprovincial match in a letter in May 1905 with Ulster. But a meeting in January of 1906 notes that there was still no word forthcoming about setting a date, the IFA having to send a reminder'.¹²² The MFA also failed to pay a referee, who had travelled from Newry to officiate a match between Cork Celtic and Shelbourne, a fee of £1.¹²³ Poor attendance records at IFA council meetings and tardiness in paying affiliation fees also helped to damage the IFA's perception of the MFA.¹²⁴ After the MFA was formed, it was the LFA more so than the IFA, that appeared to assist more in developing the game in the province. Leinster provided the new regional association with grants on occasions and provided the province with much needed competition and funding through annual inter-provincial contests.¹²⁵

In Connacht, according to Paul Gunning, despite soccer being the most popular sport in a majority of larger towns in Counties Sligo, Roscommon and Leitrim by 1901, the game was disjointed, possessing no local administration.¹²⁶ There was no Connacht Football Association by 1910, even though a Connacht Union had been proposed by Castlebar FC in 1896 and a 'grand football tournament' for the 'Championship of Connacht' was advertised in local newspapers in February 1902 with Ballinrobe, Boyle Freebooters, Ballyhaunis, Castlerea, Galway's Queens College and Carrick-on-Shannon 'scheduled to participate'.¹²⁷

Connacht received some IFA representation in 1906, when 'the newly assigned Fermanagh and Western FA would include Sligo, Manorhamilton...Donegal...and Kiltyclogher'.¹²⁸ This was the first major effort by the IFA to intervene in soccer in Connacht. The Connacht clubs that joined the

Fermanagh and Western FA experienced many logistical issues with travelling to games against opponents in Ulster. For example, in 1907 Sligo Athletic 'lamented a delay of an hour in kick-off following a rail trip of two hours and 40 minutes to Enniskillen'.¹²⁹ According to Garnham, 'In 1910 the IFA decided "not to interfere in the project" of setting up a Connacht FA to encourage the game in the west of the country'.¹³⁰ A year later, despite the lack of interest from the IFA, according to Conor Curran, there was in operation a 'Western Association Football League, which catered for clubs in Sligo, Roscommon and Leitrim'.¹³¹

The counties in Ulster furthest away from Belfast, such as Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, also experienced limited growth of the game, with the IFA showing little appetite to nurture soccer in those counties. The Donegal Football Association was formed by locals in 1894, one of the earliest county football associations, and lasted for four years. It was affiliated to the IFA. According to Curran, 'there is little in their records to suggest that any major attempt was made to promote the game in the county' by the IFA after the Donegal Football Association's decline from 1898.¹³² Curran also contends that whilst the IFA was responsible for governing soccer for the whole island right up until 1921, 'the majority of clubs and organising committees in Donegal appear to have taken on the responsibility of arranging cup competitions and exhibitions and the general promotion of soccer without much help from' the IFA.¹³³ Most clubs in Donegal by the turn of the twentieth century decided not to affiliate to the IFA. For example, the Ballyshannon and Bundoran clubs did not affiliate with the Fermanagh and Western District FA when it was formed by the IFA in 1906.¹³⁴ By 1906, 'there were at least nineteen soccer teams in Donegal and a lack of interest in joining the country's governing body was apparent rather than any major absence of clubs at this time'.¹³⁵

Soccer in the counties of South and West Ulster, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Cavan and Monaghan were also dislocated from the centre of soccer in Ireland in Belfast.¹³⁶ As highlighted above, the profile of those counties was very different to those closer to Belfast. They were sparsely populated, had little industrialisation and had more competition from other sports such as Gaelic football and rugby. This competition from the GAA prompted the IFA to offer the Fermanagh and South Tyrone League a grant of £50 in 1906 'to help extend their area after an appeal to the national

governing association that “the Gaelic body” were deliberately hosting events to clash with fixtures’.¹³⁷

It is clear that the geographic dimensions of physical landscape and issues relating to national identity in soccer reflected the wider societal issues. Soccer was founded, headquartered and experienced differently in Belfast than anywhere else in Ireland. Many of the issues that influenced the identity debate in Ireland around economics and sectarianism were mirrored in soccer. Although the IFA outwardly aimed to govern for the whole island, it remained a local body, unable or unwilling to govern for regions outside the north-east. It is for these reasons that the geographic dimensions have to be considered as significant causal factors in generating division within soccer in Ireland which ultimately led to the split in 1921.

Internal Politics

Internal and governance issues within Irish soccer are at the heart of the reasons leading to the split. It is important to assess the governance structures within Irish soccer and analyse its role as a causal factor in leading to division. Although not prominent during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, there was some disgruntlement within Leinster of an internal political nature, particularly once soccer began to take a foothold in Dublin. The roots of the internal political divisions were sown during the embryonic years of soccer in Ireland. The perception outside of the north-east that there was a Belfast bias in the selection of players for the Irish international team, the choice of venue for important matches and the distribution of finances within the IFA prevailed and grew to open antagonism, particularly as soccer grew and became more organised outside of Ulster. Garnham argues that these perceptions and claims ‘proved to be recurrent and extremely resilient’.¹³⁸

Disagreements on how the game was governed by the IFA started to crop up in Leinster once clubs started to form in Dublin. The first club to be founded in Dublin, the Dublin Association Football Club, disbanded in 1890 due to disagreements with the IFA over match official selections and decisions in an Irish Cup tie with Belfast-based club Cliftonville.¹³⁹ A prominent Leinster soccer pioneer, Thomas Kirkwood Hackett, believed the IFA could do more to promote the sport in Leinster. After a humiliating international defeat, he stated, ‘All this has come upon us because of the prejudice of five men [IFA International

Selection Committee members] who select the teams preventing anyone outside the Belfast area being chosen to represent their country'.¹⁴⁰ The most contentious issue was the selection of players for the international team. Kirkwood's complaints were echoed by Dublin-based newspaper *Sport*, who blamed the IFA of 'behaving most unfairly' in 'overlooking the Dubliners'.¹⁴¹ Newspapers often just referred to the national side as Belfast. From Ireland's first international match in 1882 up to 1900, 605 caps were offered by the IFA to players. Leinster-based players received 26 of those caps, whilst Ulster-based players received 571 (See Appendix C). Dublin newspapers accused the IFA in 1897 of giving 'as little encouragement...as they possibly can to football in Leinster'.¹⁴² The IFA was continuously accused by soccer administrators and newspapers outside of Ulster of not doing enough to spread the game throughout Ireland.

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a big uptake of interest in soccer. The IFA grew from 110 clubs in 1901 to 420 by 1910.¹⁴³ Club and international fixtures attracted larger and larger crowds. It still lagged behind England and Scotland where factors such as the embracement of professionalism and the role of business within the sport resulted in a significantly higher growth rate in both jurisdictions.¹⁴⁴ The IFA was no longer a regional body. It was the governing body for soccer throughout the whole of Ireland and it now had to deal with many regional associations, spread throughout the island. The IFA became a federal body forming divisional associations based on region. The North-East association covered Antrim (including Belfast) and Down; Mid-Ulster covered Armagh and Tyrone; North-West covered Derry; Fermanagh & Western covered Fermanagh and pockets of Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim; the LFA covered the twelve counties of Leinster; and the MFA covered the six counties of Munster. The IFA also formed sub committees such as Finance, International Selection, Protest & Appeals, and Emergency. According to Garnham, the IFA was dominated by a few men and a few clubs. The Belfast bias 'guaranteed not only a disproportionate level of influence for Ulster delegates, but through this a greater level of power for the professional clubs that dominated the sport in Belfast'.¹⁴⁵

Soccer grew more in Leinster than anywhere else in the first decade of the twentieth century and this saw the LFA challenge the authority of the IFA. There were 119 Leinster clubs affiliated to the IFA by 1910 and the LFA became the largest region of the IFA in 1913.¹⁴⁶ With the increased popularity of the game and the creation of strong regional

blocks, the IFA could no longer just cater for the north-east. Although the IFA offered some support to regions outside of Ulster, the first decade of the twentieth century saw it retain its insular outlook to the detriment of unity within soccer on the island. As the LFA became more powerful, successful and prominent from the beginning of the twentieth century, divisions between it and the IFA became more pronounced. The main factors contributing to this division were of an internal political nature. The first decade of the twentieth century saw the new powerbase of Leinster beginning to threaten the previously unchallenged dominance of Belfast. Leinster looked to exert its growing authority. The IFA strove to maintain its power and a number of incidents highlighted the fractious nature between the two bodies.

In 1902, four players withdrew from the Leinster squad for an inter-provincial match against Ulster that Leinster ultimately lost heavily by 8-1. Reasons they cited for withdrawal were illness through blood poisoning and work commitments.¹⁴⁷ Humiliated by the nature of the defeat, the LFA decided to make scapegoats of the withdrawn players and suspended them for a month. This rash decision was soon questioned by the IFA. It claimed the LFA had broken protocol by suspending the players without inviting the perceived offenders to a meeting to defend themselves and the IFA's approval had not been sought which was required in order for the suspensions to stand.¹⁴⁸ The LFA was forced to back down and the suspensions were removed. All excuses offered by the players now were deemed satisfactory.

In March 1903, Leinster complained that the IFA had not sent or replied to any of its correspondence since September 1902, a period of six months.¹⁴⁹ A month later the IFA intervened in a dispute between the LFA and one of its clubs, Shelbourne. In this instance, the IFA firmly supported the Leinster body. Shelbourne threatened to boycott a Leinster Cup tie against Bohemians unless a cross-channel referee was appointed, the club stating it had no faith in a Dublin-based referee. The LFA suspended the club as a result. To settle the dispute, the IFA chairman, D.W. Foy was invited by the LFA to Dublin to mediate. He concluded that 'no club could be allowed to dictate to Association on appointment of referee'.¹⁵⁰ As well as being reliant on the IFA to resolve internal disputes, the Leinster body also needed the help of the parent body in the early 1900s to secure revenue for its clubs. It lamented the decision of the IFA to cancel the annual inter-provincial match in 1903,

claiming 'it will be a great hardship on the Leinster clubs if the Interprovincials are discontinued'.¹⁵¹

As Leinster's profile rose, it sought increased representation within the IFA and for Dublin to be chosen as a venue more regularly for important matches. In 1907, the LFA proposed that 'Leinster representation should be increased from 3 to 4 in proportion to the number of clubs affiliated from Leinster' as well as 'for Senior, Intermediate and Irish Junior Cup finals to be played alternately in Dublin and Belfast where a Leinster club would be in the final'.¹⁵² It is important to note that complaints of an internal political nature did not just come from the LFA. Ulster-based divisional associations Mid-Ulster and North-West also regularly complained of a Belfast bias within the IFA.¹⁵³ This is an example of how the 'otherness' of Ulster does not explain the complexities and differences within the province.

The earlier issues and disagreements between the LFA and the IFA were mere slights compared to two incidents in 1908 which brought about a bitter dispute between Leinster and the parent body that almost caused a split in Irish soccer. Disputes centred on the outgoing secretary of the Leinster body, William Sheffield, and an abortive attempt by Leinster to obtain a loan of £200 from the IFA. Sheffield had been secretary of the LFA from its early years and initially enjoyed cordial relations with the body. He threatened to resign as secretary in 1903 as he desired not to attend all Leinster Cup semi-finals and finals, deemed necessary by the LFA at the time. He withdrew his resignation once the LFA established that he could appoint a substitute at those matches in his stead.¹⁵⁴ Relations between Sheffield and the rest of the committee continued to deteriorate. They finally came to a head in 1907 when the LFA discovered that Sheffield had not forwarded twelve Leinster clubs for affiliation to the IFA, even though some of their applications had been received by Sheffield six months earlier.¹⁵⁵ The IFA rejected the clubs for membership unless details of matches the clubs had played in were forwarded to the parent body, in essence questioning the validity of the twelve clubs as actual clubs.¹⁵⁶ This was a sensitive issue for the Leinster Committee as claims had been made by the IFA throughout the 1900s of clubs and regional associations creating bogus clubs to boost their numbers with the aim of wielding more power within the IFA.¹⁵⁷ Subsequently, the LFA opened and advertised the position of secretary to the public, a clear affront to Sheffield.¹⁵⁸ Jack Ryder replaced Sheffield as the new secretary.¹⁵⁹ Ryder served as secretary of the LFA up until the split of

1921 when he became the FAI's first secretary, remaining in that post up until his death in 1935.¹⁶⁰

The IFA became centrally involved with the episode when Sheffield complained to the parent body that, as a former secretary of the LFA, he was entitled to be co-opted onto the Leinster Council, something that had not happened after he lost his job as secretary.¹⁶¹ After the IFA enquired on the matter, the LFA informed the IFA 'that it came to the knowledge of the [Leinster] Council in going through the books that certain monies which had not been properly accounted for and also having regard to his conduct as secretary to the Council he was not considered a proper person to sit on the Council'.¹⁶² The IFA ruled that Sheffield still should have been co-opted as Council member and threatened to suspend the entire Leinster Council. At a fractious meeting, the Leinster Council produced evidence of Sheffield retaining money owed to the LFA on a number of occasions. After a lengthy discussion, the LFA resolved, 'In accordance with the direction of the IFA contained in their resolution of the 6th inst. we hereby co-opt Mr. Sheffield a member of this Council but...we consider that it is against the interests and purity of football that Mr. Sheffield should become a member of this Council'.¹⁶³ Seven LFA council members handed in their resignations immediately afterwards, which were rejected by the chairman. Sheffield's co-option was one of the main discussion points at the following LFA Annual General Meeting. With Sheffield in attendance, the LFA produced evidence that he had not handed over affiliation fees as secretary. He also failed to get elected onto the Leinster Council for the following year. The LFA finally suspended 'him from taking part in the management of football in Leinster'.¹⁶⁴ Although the IFA queried what rules Sheffield had broken, the matter was soon dropped by the parent body and Sheffield's involvement with soccer in Leinster was at an end.

The other incident that saw both bodies pitted against each other related to money. In early 1908, the LFA were in dire financial straits and canvassed the IFA for a subsidy of £200.¹⁶⁵ The IFA agreed to send the £200 loan to Leinster on terms to be agreed by a sub-committee set up by the IFA. The IFA and LFA both agreed that the sub-committee would consist of five trustees, three elected by the IFA Council and two elected by the LFA. The LFA's Finance Committee unanimously chose P.H. Stewart and William Fitzsimons as their representatives.¹⁶⁶ Stewart was deemed unacceptable by the IFA, for reasons that they did not record. The IFA suggested T. Kearney who was deemed unacceptable to Leinster,

presumably because Stewart was rejected.¹⁶⁷ Unable to come to an arrangement with the IFA, the LFA withdrew its interest in receiving a loan from the IFA, securing a bank overdraft instead.¹⁶⁸ Leinster had proposed a number of money making and cost saving measures earlier in the year including reduced fees from the IFA (the request was rejected);¹⁶⁹ an annual match between Bohemians and Shelbourne with the clubs to get ten per cent of the gate receipts; and the LFA to receive one third of the gate receipts for preliminary rounds of the Senior Leinster Cup, one half for the semi-finals and 80 per cent for the final.¹⁷⁰ The IFA had also taken exception to Leinster describing their loan terms of 1908 as insulting.¹⁷¹

Looking back at the two incidents, it would be hard to draw any conclusion other than that the LFA was shown huge disrespect in both instances by the parent body. By mistreating the LFA, the IFA sowed the seeds for the division that occurred in 1921. On asking Leinster to choose two of the five names as trustees for the proposed loan, and subsequently attempting to impose a trustee not agreeable to Leinster, the IFA went back on the terms it had drawn up and presented a scenario Leinster was always not likely to consent to. The Sheffield case added further fuel to the feelings of bullying from the IFA, feelings that the IFA was interfering unfairly in internal Leinster affairs. In many ways it is surprising that Leinster did not secede from the IFA at this juncture. It is clear from minute books of the LFA and IFA, and from press reports in the first decade of the twentieth century, that divisions over issues such as geography, religion, national identity and the overall political climate were all secondary to problems that arose over intra-governance issues.

A secession did occur in 1912 when all of the senior clubs, with the exception of Linfield and Bohemians, left the IFA after their demands for a greater say in the running of the IFA as well as increased gate receipts for international and other fixtures were rejected by the parent body. There was also dissent amongst clubs by the Irish Football League's decision to create a new tier in soccer, a second division. The IFA Council permitted clubs from this second division entry into the Irish Cup, leading to the senior clubs being unhappy with the prospect of reduced gate receipts from playing newer less established clubs, and the second-tier clubs being unhappy that they would now be considered as senior clubs without entry into junior competitions.¹⁷² The dispute lasted for much of 1912 with the seceding clubs forming a new association rivalling the IFA.

Central to this dispute was the internal political make-up of soccer in Ireland as well as the divide between amateurism and professionalism. Many of the clubs, particularly clubs that had embraced professionalism, believed the IFA was a poorly run organisation that squandered its finances. As well as paying annual affiliation fees to the IFA and provincial associations, clubs were required to give the bulk of gate receipts to the IFA, with clubs receiving ten per cent of the takings. At the 1910 Annual Meeting of the IFA, the finances of the IFA came in for close scrutiny with many criticising the lavish expenses on hotels and other travelling costs. One council member, Thomas Moles, future editor of the *Belfast Telegraph* and Ulster Unionist MP, claimed 'the Football Association had been too liberal, and he suggested that the Association should be run as a business organisation, and not as a philanthropic society'.¹⁷³ Out of total receipts of £3,092 14s 9d, there was just a balance of £4 10s 1d, seen as extraordinary by many delegates, with some claiming the IFA would soon end up in the Bankruptcy Court if the finances were not brought under control.¹⁷⁴ In 1911, a proposal by Dublin club Shelbourne to award clubs more gate receipts for Irish Cup finals and replays was defeated by the IFA. Shelbourne wanted each club to receive 25 per cent of the receipts, up from ten per cent.¹⁷⁵

The catalyst that led to the split occurred in February 1912. Linfield demanded 20 per cent of the gate receipts from the IFA for the international match against Scotland, due to be played at its ground, Windsor Park the following month, instead of the usual ten per cent it was entitled to receive under the IFA Articles of Association.¹⁷⁶ This decision led to four members of the Linfield Club Committee to be suspended for two years by the IFA and the decision reversed, with the rest of the Linfield Committee and Trustees agreeing to accept the ten per cent offered by the IFA.¹⁷⁷ Subsequently, members of the Cliftonville, Belfast Celtic, Distillery and Glentoran clubs (all based in Belfast), passed a resolution, 'that, if the remaining members of the Committee and the trustees of the Linfield Club grant the use of their ground at 10 per cent, and desert their suspended colleagues, the Belfast senior clubs do not take part in any match against the Linfield Club'.¹⁷⁸ Two days later, an IFA Emergency Committee meeting ruled that all members of those four clubs in attendance at the meeting where the Linfield boycott was agreed upon, were suspended from the IFA for three years.¹⁷⁹ Representatives from Glentoran, Distillery, Belfast Celtic, Derry Celtic, Glenavon, Cliftonville and Shelbourne, the sole Dublin club, met on 21 February and

established a new association for the governance of soccer in Ireland.¹⁸⁰ The IFA Emergency Committee responded by suspending those clubs.¹⁸¹

The IFA now had in its fold, just two senior clubs, Linfield and Bohemians, ironically the two clubs most affected by the IFA using club grounds, being the proprietors of Windsor and Dalymount Parks respectively. It did, though, have the support of many regional associations including Leinster and Munster. The LFA passed a resolution desiring 'to assure the IFA Ltd. of their support in the present crisis and further that the Council considers it their duty to urge upon the clubs and players under their jurisdiction the necessity for remaining loyal to the IFA Ltd'.¹⁸² As well as being suspended from the IFA, Shelbourne was also suspended from the LFA. The IFA also received a letter of loyalty from the MFA.¹⁸³

The new Irish Football Association had distinct advantages over the IFA. Most of the senior clubs in Ireland were now under its governance. It quickly established a new cup competition.¹⁸⁴ The IFA introduced new clubs to the Irish Senior League to replace the suspended clubs. The IFA decided that the league would consist of two clubs from Dublin and Belfast, one each from Derry, Lurgan and Portadown as well as Linfield and Bohemians.¹⁸⁵ The clubs the IFA finally agreed upon to form its new league were Linfield, Bohemians, St James' Gate, the Guilds from Derry, Portadown, Lurgan Celtic, Ulster and Old Park.¹⁸⁶

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1912, the two competing governing bodies for soccer in Ireland pitted themselves against each other, on many occasions organising matches to coincide with matches being organised by its rival. On the same day as Ireland played Scotland at Windsor Park, for example, a benefit match was held by the new association, for Shelbourne in Grosvenor Park, Belfast between Glentoran and the Rest of the new League with an attendance of 10,000, just 2,000 shy of the full international. The rival match led to reduced gate receipts for the IFA, significantly down on what it would expect from a home international.¹⁸⁷ The IFA organised a match between Blackburn Rovers to play a selected Irish team in aid of the Titanic Disaster Fund, the ship having been sunk in the North Atlantic the previous month, in May on the same day that Distillery was scheduled to play Belfast Celtic in the Charity Cup Final of the new association.¹⁸⁸

The internal political nature of the dispute was the primary reason for its cause and escalation. It also led to its resolution. By the time the IFA held its Annual Meeting in Portadown in May, the dispute had been ongoing for three months with no end in sight. Up

until then, there also seemed little interest from either side to even engage with the other. The IFA had rejected the suggestion from prominent English journalist, James Catton, for the English, Scottish and Welsh FAs to host a conference between the disputed parties, saying there was nothing to arbitrate.¹⁸⁹ This contrite position had changed when the IFA annual meeting convened. The IFA expressed deep regret for 'the serious crisis' seen as 'detrimental to the future working of the game as a sport in this country'.¹⁹⁰ The IFA also felt that 'the time has arrived when the seriousness of the position should be gone into and a settlement of the unfortunate dispute be made in the interests of the game'.¹⁹¹

Both sides agreed to enter into negotiations during the summer of 1912 to resolve the dispute. After a number of meetings, they came to an agreement in August and the dispute was settled.¹⁹² The major points agreed upon between both parties were representation on the IFA Council for all senior league clubs: the senior clubs to organise the Irish Cup except for Protests and Appeals and the finances for the final tie which would be under the remit of the whole council; reduced representation on the IFA Council for the regional associations; clubs from the second division to be eligible for the Intermediate Cup Competition; ten per cent could only be agreed to for the 1912 gate receipts to clubs; no punishment to be meted out to Linfield and Bohemians for siding with the IFA; and all suspensions to be automatically rescinded. The IFA also agreed to discharge the liabilities of the new association to the value of 70 pounds. The new association wrote to the IFA accepting the terms, and then dissolved itself.¹⁹³

The first major split in Irish soccer was ended with the IFA seceding to many of the demands of the senior clubs. Given the status of the clubs who seceded and the success of the new association, the IFA was forced to compromise, something it also did once the FAI succeeded beyond expectations after the split of 1921. Internal politics within Irish soccer was the primary reason for causing the 1912 split and for its escalation. The stubbornness of the IFA to compromise, and its unwillingness even to engage, led to the dispute lasting for months. The IFA's resolve was certainly strengthened by the unwavering support of the other home football associations. The LFA had seen that the tough stance taken by the seceded clubs had paid dividends for those clubs, an approach it learned to adopt in later years.

The internal rifts that occurred between the IFA and the LFA in the first decade of the twentieth century in some cases seem trivial and inconsequential. Others, more serious,

saw attempts at secessions. The internal political issues resulted in deeper distrust amongst the Irish soccer community that increased further in the years ahead. The split in soccer in 1912 that led to the formation of a new football association was caused and nurtured by internal political issues, by professionalised clubs looking for more control and increased finances. Instead of resolving the grievances quickly, the dispute lingered for months due to a lack of communication.

International Sporting Politics

The theme of international sporting politics has many internal political elements, intra-governance issues within a supra-governance (federation) structure. As international sporting federations grew more powerful, they increasingly intervened in national and international political affairs.¹⁹⁴ From its very beginnings, the IFA forged closed links with the main power within soccer globally at the time, the FA, as well as with the SFA and the Football Association of Wales (FA of Wales). Its participation in the IFAB and the British Home Championship, has remained a major source of pride throughout the IFA's history. Garnham has also shown (see above) that 'within a British context in championships that suggested a parity between the constituent nations of the United Kingdom could satisfy the aspirations of Unionists and Home Rulers alike'.¹⁹⁵ The links with the home associations were decisive in ensuring the IFA's hegemony of the game in Ireland and of creating powerful allies within the global game.

The IFAB was formed in 1886 by the four home associations to approve changes to rules on soccer.¹⁹⁶ The IFA, along with the other home associations, remains a member of the IFAB, as well as FIFA, which became a member in 1913. The associations also decided that an annual championship should be played between the four home countries which became the British Home Championship. This annual international tournament, the first in the world, began in 1884 and lasted for 100 years, ending in 1984.¹⁹⁷ The IFA's participation in the IFAB and the British Home Championship from the very beginning imbued it with considerable prestige as well as a strong income stream. The IFA was able to forge close links with the other home associations through regular meetings and collaboration on rule changes and the organising of matches. These advantages proved considerable when its power within Ireland was threatened.

The other home nation football associations of England, Scotland and Wales supported the IFA steadfastly during the split of 1912. Arguably, their support was crucial in maintaining the hegemony of the IFA in governing soccer in Ireland in 1912 as would be the case after 1921. The IFA had co-operated with the other home nations since the 1880s through the IFAB and the British Home Championship. The annual tournament and IFAB meeting allowed the IFA to create and maintain relationships with the other home associations, relationships long established by 1912.

The IFAB agreed in 1894 to recognise each association's suspensions.¹⁹⁸ This agreement left players who played for any of the suspended clubs in a precarious position. The players were bound to their present club or the other suspended clubs with no prospect of transferring to a club associated with any governing body of the home associations.¹⁹⁹ Their prospect of international football was also removed. One player used the 1912 crisis to his advantage. James McKnight of Glentoran, applied to the IFA for reinstatement as soon as Glentoran was suspended. His wish was granted. Without notifying Glentoran, McKnight left for England and joined Preston North End on what was effectively a free transfer. With his transferrable fee estimated at £300, Glentoran, as a suspended club, instead received nothing.²⁰⁰

Clubs in Britain also came to the aid of the IFA affiliated clubs Linfield and Bohemians who found themselves ostracised and devoid of local opposition. They were reliant on opposition from overseas to sustain them financially during the crisis. Prominent cross-channel clubs including Everton, Glasgow Rangers, Preston North End, Derby County, Greenock Morton, Blackpool, Leeds City, Renton and Clyde all sent teams over to Ireland to play against Linfield and Bohemians.²⁰¹

As well as agreeing to clubs under their governance visiting Linfield and Bohemians in Ireland, the home associations refused to recognise the new breakaway Irish association and the clubs affiliated to it.²⁰² At the 1912 IFAB Annual Meeting, held in Aberystwyth, Wales, on 8 June, the British associations offered an extraordinary gesture of support to the IFA. At the meeting they noted:

A vote of sympathy was accorded the Council of the Irish Association in its troubled times, and a hearty vote was passed to stand loyally by the Irish F.A., and give it the support of the other Associations. It was further unanimously decided by the delegates present to urge their

respective Associations to play the International Matches with Ireland for the ensuing season in Ireland, and thus give the Irish F.A. valuable support.²⁰³

All of the Irish international matches for 1913 were held in Ireland, offering a huge boost to the beleaguered IFA coffers.²⁰⁴ Such support from the other home associations undoubtedly instilled the belief amongst many within the IFA that this provided the parent body with a significant advantage over all internal opposition. It also may have instilled a degree of complacency within the IFA to know that, should internal disputes arise again, powerful allies would be at hand to lend support and to limit the ability of potential usurpers to challenge its hegemony in Ireland.

Conclusion

Geographical factors such as physical landscape and identity issues relating to ethno-sectarianism and economics have fomented division in Irish society. Ulster was seen as a 'Place Apart', not just by unionists but by many nationalists too.²⁰⁵ Some Ulster archaeologists even 'tended to emphasize Ulster's archaeological difference from the rest of Ireland, and its links to other "British" regions', particularly Scotland.²⁰⁶ This 'two nations' theory is problematic as it ignores the many ambiguities and complexities that exist within Irish identities. Hennessey has shown that, for unionists, their 'Britishness and Irishness were in a constant state of flux'.²⁰⁷ For all of Ulster's differences, no county there was homogenous in terms of religion. Catholics and nationalists made up a significant portion of the province's population.

There also were clear differences between Belfast and rural Ulster, the rural part of the province having more in common with the south and west of Ireland. Belfast's economic and social development made it unique in Irish terms and more like other British cities. Belfast provided 'evidence of what the Union could deliver'.²⁰⁸ As nationalism was asserting the essence of a Gaelic and Catholic Ireland, a British and Protestant consciousness was growing in the north-east of Ulster.²⁰⁹

Soccer was establishing its identity at the same time and its geographic profile mirrored many of the wider societal issues. Just as the geographic and identities elements fomented division in wider society, they also were significant casual factors in leading to the division in Irish soccer. Given its industrial strength, Belfast and its hinterland became 'the game's heartland in Ireland'.²¹⁰ In Ulster there was a sense of pride in introducing soccer to

Ireland. For other areas, soccer's headquarters was a reason for derision. As in wider society, there were significant differences between how soccer was played and viewed in the north-east, compared to the rest of Ireland. Through its migrant population, it evolved from a working-class base. Dublin and other areas were more reliant on educational institutions and the military for spreading the game. Soccer in Belfast had less rivalry from the GAA than it did in other regions. The north-east embraced professionalism before others did, its 'grasping materialism' again setting it apart from the rest of the country. The IFA also failed to govern affectively outside of its heartland. The further away from Belfast, the IFA did not intervene in promoting the game, even in counties in Ulster. Such differences proved problematic for maintaining unity in the game.

Despite some maintaining that the IFA was a 'unionist preserve', the reality was more complicated. The IFA incorporated symbolism of an Irish national identity. Soccer was and is enjoyed by unionists and nationalists, Protestants and Catholics in great numbers. For both unionists and nationalists, soccer 'fitted well with their own emergent national identities'.²¹¹ As in wider society, those in rural Ulster had different experiences of soccer than its heartland in Belfast. These complications demonstrate that the explaining of the soccer division as a purely geographic north-south divide is too simplistic, and ignores the enormous complexities and ambiguities of the identities within the game.

Whilst the differences over geography, religion and identity were significant, internal governance issues were primarily the cause of the Irish soccer split. By analysing the 'lived experiences' of people and organisations on the ground, it is clear we need to move away from the purely political and identity related treatises that have dominated studies on partition. Soccer administrators, players and supporters were exercised over issues such as international team selection, finances and venue locations more than anything else from the game's beginnings. The first major split within the game was caused by internal governance issues. Whilst some intra-governance issues seemed trivial and inconsequential, others demonstrated the IFA's arrogance and indifference to regional associations outside the north-east. Cumulatively they proved to be extremely resilient and nurtured long-term resentments.

The international sporting political dimension was another important intra-governance factor used by the IFA to maintain hegemony within the game in Ireland. The IFA, the fourth oldest football association in the world, forged links with the other home

associations that it was able to use effectively to resolve the split of 1912. By using supra-national bodies such as the IFAB, the IFA was able to solve a local dispute. As international sporting federations grew more powerful, their input into sporting divisions became more significant.

Chapter Three – Ireland in Conflict (1912-1921)

Introduction

By looking at key events such as the home rule crisis, the First World War, the Easter Rising and the Anglo-Irish War of Independence, events relating to the national political environment, it will show through the prism of soccer, how 'great events affected the lives of ordinary people'.¹ It is hard to disagree with Laffan when he claims that in 1911, 'Irishmen of all political opinions would have been amazed if they could have foreseen the division of Ireland into two separate states ten years later. There was nothing predestined about the settlements of 1920-1'.² Given that the Irish political landscape moved from a position of a likely implementation of an orderly home rule in 1911 to possible civil war, a World War, revolution and war, and partition within a decade, it is only natural that such events had major ramifications for soccer within Ireland. The seismic and chaotic developments in such a short period, unforeseen beforehand, deeply affected every person and organisation at that time. These events from the political centre had a major impact on the lives of people and organisations on the ground, including on supporters, players and administrators of soccer. This integrative approach helps to move away from narrow political histories of key moments in modern Irish history by providing a more comprehensive understanding of significant events through showing how ordinary lives were affected by them.

A strong correlation exists between the political and geographical aspects to identity issues in Ireland, given their strong geopolitical dimension on the island. The fluctuation of Irish identities, mainly on a north-south basis, during this period, and how the many identities within soccer were impacted by the vast upheavals that occurred throughout the decade are analysed under the national political environment section and not the geography section, mainly for continuation purposes. The theme of geography is specifically analysed through the forging of a manufactured temporary division on a north-south basis within soccer during the First World War which became permanent shortly afterwards.

Whilst seismic events of a national political nature impacted on the Irish soccer community from 1912 to 1921, there were still issues of an internal political nature at the time that contributed significantly to driving Leinster and Belfast apart. Central to the concerns of soccer administrators within Leinster were still the internal political issues that had dominated the history between the IFA and Leinster. This intra-organisational analysis is

crucial to understanding how lives, from a sporting perspective, were experienced on the ground.

The National Political Environment

The huge divide in Irish society that flared up from the home rule crisis of 1912 onwards impacted upon all areas of public and civic life in Ireland, including sport as a whole and soccer in particular. The broad appeal of the game to Protestants and Catholics, unionists and nationalists, from multiple classes, led to some of the problems faced by soccer in Ireland. According to Sugden and Bairner, 'Football has not simply been on the receiving end of Ireland's troubled political history. It has often reflected the divisions which have helped to create political unrest and, on occasions, has even helped to exacerbate these divisions'.³ There was not an overt sectarian nor political nature in how the IFA governed soccer before the split of 1921. There was, though, a subtle difference in its treatment of Protestants and Catholics as there was with its treatment of nationalists and unionists. Invariably as an organisation, it tended to gravitate towards a Protestant and unionist stance.

Irish nationalist concerns of the IFA being a 'unionist preserve' were not helped by the Marquess of Londonderry, a major figure within Irish unionism, replacing Major Chichester as IFA president in 1897.⁴ He once claimed in the House of Lords that 'the one and only pledge that I gave to my constituents was that to my dying day I would stand by and maintain the Union between England and Ireland'.⁵ In 1892, attempts by some members of the IFA council to make Thomas Sexton, nationalist MP for West Belfast, a vice-president were rejected by the IFA on the grounds it would be too political.⁶ The Second Boer War of 1899-1902 saw nationalists generally supporting the Boers with unionists supporting the British. In early 1900 'the Association's Finance Committee donated £20 to the Transvaal War Fund and established its own fund to buy comforts for the troops in South Africa'.⁷ Also in 1900, the IFA made Field Marshall Lord Roberts (the British commander-in-chief in South Africa) and General Sir George White (commander of the besieged garrison at Ladysmith) vice-presidents of the IFA, clearly as political a decision as making a nationalist MP a vice-president.⁸

At the 1912 IFA AGM some council members proposed to confine the AGM to Belfast every year and to bar journalists from attending IFA council meetings. The first

proposal was an attempt by 'Protestant Belfast to stop the meetings going to Roman Catholic Dublin' and the second was 'intended to ensure that James McAnerny, a Catholic journalist with the *Irish News* and a representative of the Belfast Celtic club, was excluded from the IFA Council'.⁹ Both motions were defeated by the IFA. It was a clear attempt by Protestant members trying to limit Catholic influence within the IFA. The IFA was virulently opposed to soccer being played on Sundays. Sabbatarianism was a trait more associated with Protestantism than Catholicism. Many Catholic-leaning clubs in Leinster as well as Belfast Celtic were in favour of playing soccer on Sundays.¹⁰

It was shown in Chapter Two that the IFA incorporated symbolism demonstrating its Irish identity. According to Garnham, 'despite their Protestant and Unionist background', the IFA was 'prepared to display both a conspicuous Irish patriotism, and a measured anti-Englishness. This was not simply a case of slavish colonial imitation and subservience'.¹¹ By refusing to 'rally to the call of the Ulster Volunteers in 1913', the IFA demonstrated it was unwilling to be the athletic arm of Ulster unionism.¹² Soccer clubs, on the other hand, tended to be, on occasions, overtly sectarian and political in outlook and actions. There were very few teams consisting of a mixture of Protestant and Catholic members in Ulster, particularly in the north-east.¹³ In South and West Ulster, soccer was played along multi-denominational lines with Protestants and Catholics regularly playing in teams together.¹⁴ It was not an issue in most of the rest of the Ireland, due to the religious homogeneity of the population.¹⁵ Most teams in the north-east of Ulster were exclusively Protestant or Catholic. If the name of a club included the word *Celtic*, it was a Catholic club. The religious and political divide was most pronounced between Belfast Celtic and Linfield.

Belfast Celtic was an amalgamation of junior clubs on the Falls Road, a predominantly Catholic area of West Belfast. It was formed in August 1891 based on the Glasgow Celtic model, a club who gave the new team in Belfast a sizeable donation.¹⁶ Although the club officials never regarded the team as an exclusively Catholic preserve and it employed many prominent Protestant players throughout its history, the impression prevailed in Belfast of it being a purely Catholic club.¹⁷ From its early days, there was always a threat of sectarian violence anytime Belfast Celtic played Linfield or Glentoran in particular.¹⁸ Jonathan Magee notes that 'the rivalry also possessed an intra-Belfast character as each club was based in a particular quadrant of Belfast: Linfield in the south, Celtic in the west, and Glentoran in the east'.¹⁹ Linfield was founded in 1886, formed by the

staff of the Ulster Spinning Company's Linfield Mill, located in Sandy Row, a predominantly Protestant area of Belfast.²⁰ Celtic and Linfield were seen by people in the city as representing opposite sides in politics. A person's religion was often ascertained by knowing which team he/she supported. On becoming professional, both clubs chose to predominantly hire staff of the religious persuasion that the clubs were most closely aligned to. By 1912, 'Celtic and Linfield were simply identified in the English press as Belfast's Catholic and Protestant teams'.²¹ From the very start, these clubs were defined and shaped by sectarianism.

To curb crowd trouble, clubs put notices out condemning violent conduct. Prices were increased to keep out the lower classes, seen by the authorities as responsible for a lot of the crowd trouble. Police and stewards also started to appear at games. The IFA and its affiliated clubs started to impose fines, too. The measures seemed to have the desired effect as fewer incidents of violence at matches were reported up to 1911.²² Celtic and Linfield were even enjoying more of a cordial relationship. In April 1908 and March 1910, Linfield and Celtic played benefit matches for some of the Celtic players, with Joseph Devlin, nationalist MP for West Belfast and shareholder of Belfast Celtic, even kicking off one of the games. No crowd trouble was recorded at either of the matches.²³ Hepburn has shown how this more cordial relationship reflected wider Belfast society at the time where Devlin, a Catholic, was able to get elected as MP in West Belfast in 1906 with support from Protestants, something that became unimaginable in subsequent elections. A song, 'Orange and Green will carry the day', was even used by Devlin's campaign team in 1906.²⁴ It is difficult to discern the exact reasons for violence, or the absence of it, at soccer matches in Belfast during this period, on whether soccer was the root cause or responding to wider societal violence.

The mood between nationalists and unionists changed significantly with the introduction of the third home rule bill in 1912, with soccer and particularly Belfast Celtic affected deeply by the political turmoil. To combat anti-home rule propaganda the Ulster Liberal Association, organised by William Pirrie, chairman of Harland and Wolff and a home rule supporter, arranged for a pro-home rule rally to be held in Ulster Hall in January 1912 with First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill and John Redmond as guest speakers.²⁵ Due to vehement opposition from unionists on a pro-home rule rally being held in Ulster Hall, a key symbol of Ulster unionism, the rally had to be rescheduled in a different location.

The rally organisers chose 'Paradise', Celtic Park, home ground of Belfast Celtic instead.²⁶ Belfast Celtic, 'by offering the venue for such a prominent display of support for Home Rule, had in many ways become more politicised, more associated with nationalism and more of a target for those opposed to Home Rule'.²⁷ Belfast Celtic's ground was also used for drilling by the Irish Volunteers, a nationalist army formed in direct opposition to the UVF.²⁸

Soccer became directly involved in political and sectarian tensions in the build-up to 'Ulster Day' (see p. 27) in September 1912. The convivial atmosphere at soccer matches in recent years had evaporated. Fans from Belfast Celtic and Linfield were involved in an ugly riot on 12 September in Celtic Park, the most vicious soccer riot ever witnessed up to that point in the whole of the United Kingdom.²⁹ With 20,000 in attendance, 100 people were injured in the riot, with 60 treated in the hospitals. Serious wounds included gunshot wounds, fractured skulls (including to a sixteen-year-old), severe injuries to eyes, faces and arms and many scalp wounds.³⁰ The *Irish Times* stated, 'All the elements which go to make up a party riot were present, and this mixture of football and politics, no matter how one may look at it, is certainly not good for sport, and is undoubtedly bad for politics.'³¹

According to Loughlin, the sectarian violence impacted negatively on Belfast as a whole and diminished its identity as a "British" city. British cities expected 'a standard civic behaviour' which Belfast was not able to meet, and as a result, many in Britain felt Belfast was identified 'more as Irish – that is violent – than British'.³² As a result of the riot, the Irish Football League ordered 'that under no circumstances will any banners, flags, or other emblems of any kind be permitted inside our respective grounds at football matches, and any attempt to display such will be treated as an offence, and will be severely punished'.³³ The presence of symbols of identity such as flags, anthems and other emblems became more conspicuous at soccer matches as the political turmoil heightened, symbols that Michael Billig writes that 'call attention to themselves and their symbolic message', for each identity, an example of 'consciously displaying its position and distancing itself from its neighbour'.³⁴

There were some follow-up incidents at soccer matches after the riot in Celtic Park, between Celtic and Distillery in Grosvenor Park and between Celtic and Linfield again in Windsor Park in November 1912.³⁵ Although more pronounced in Belfast, political displays were also witnessed at soccer matches in Dublin. The last senior international held in Dublin under the governance of the IFA was in 1913, between Ireland and Scotland. It was

attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland the Earl of Aberdeen who received a lukewarm reception from the crowd and the 'Ireland's Own' band refused to play 'God Save the King' before the match.³⁶ The GAA mouthpiece the *Gaelic Athlete* lauded the band calling them the 'Irish-Ireland's Own Band' for their 'creditable' action in not playing the British national anthem.³⁷ The IFA, dealing with its own division in 1912 on top of external events, was powerless to avoid the politicisation of the sport as the country looked to be spiralling towards civil war, particularly so at club level where 'ideas of nationality and national identity came to be transposed'.³⁸

When war broke out in 1914, all parts of society were consumed with the war effort.³⁹ It had an immediate economic impact. Banks were closed, food prices rose and unemployment steadily increased, peaking in September 1914.⁴⁰ Most forms of entertainment were severely affected by the war. With the exception of cinema which 'flourished as civilians flocked to watch battle films and newsreels', recreational travel and public entertainments were significantly curtailed.⁴¹ There was also a shortage of train services, limiting the mobility of people to go to events. This curbed the ability of soccer clubs to travel from Dublin to Belfast and vice versa.

The IFA, its regional divisions and affiliated clubs were deeply affected by the war. Within the IFA Council, many of its leaders left to fight on the front. Most notably, the chairman, James McElmunn Wilton, accepted a commission in the army, for which he received £50 from the IFA, a sum of money many struggling clubs did not receive.⁴² Wilton distinguished himself in the war and was wounded twice, including on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916, and for which he received the Military Cross for 'conspicuous gallantry'.⁴³ Wilton played a pivotal role as chairman once Irish soccer split in 1921. Other council members and divisional representatives volunteered to serve too, including J.M.B. Wilson from Dublin and Victor Morgan from Belfast.⁴⁴ Another council member, Thompson Gamble MacBride, who was also secretary of the Municipal Unionist Association of Belfast, joined the Royal Irish Fusiliers.⁴⁵ John Ferguson who had held the key position of IFA secretary since 1906, had to resign his post once the War Office appointed him as organising secretary of the Ulster Recruiting Council of the war effort in 1915.⁴⁶ Many of the administrators from the IFA who volunteered for the war were unionist in outlook. The loss of these key men to the IFA organisation throughout the war contributed

to a loss of leadership within the association, during a time when the LFA and many Dublin clubs started to assert themselves more so than before.

Players and supporters also volunteered in big numbers. *Sport*, in an article entitled 'Ominous Outlook for "Soccer" Football', worried for the game's future:

Irish gate receipts for the opening month show a big decrease on the corresponding month last year, and the "pro" clubs find themselves in a position of anxiety. Fully 20,000 young men, 60 per cent of whom were football followers, have responded to the war call, and Linfield appear to be the worst hit of the Belfast clubs.⁴⁷

It was not only unionist-leaning nor Belfast-based clubs who contributed to the war effort. David Fitzpatrick has written about the complexity and diversity of the make-up of Ireland's volunteers to the front throughout the war. He claims it was not just economic rationality nor for ideological reasons that determined why people joined, but 'by the attitudes and behaviour of comrades - kinsmen, neighbours, and fellow-members of organizations and fraternities'.⁴⁸ According to Fitzpatrick, members of 'militias, fraternities or sporting clubs were particularly susceptible to collective pressure'. It 'is not surprising that sportsmen were enticed into units'.⁴⁹ Reflecting society-wide trends, Protestant and Catholic soccer players and supporters from north and south, volunteered in large numbers. Forty players from Bohemians 'joined Lord Kitchener's army', more than half of the team enlisting in divisions such as the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, the Irish Guards and the Royal Irish Rifles.⁵⁰ Former international and Bohemians player Harold Sloan was killed in action in 1917.⁵¹ Harry Barron, Dublin-born footballer for Shelbourne, Queen's Park Rangers and Sheffield Wednesday was severely wounded at Ypres in 1916.⁵² The LFA saw the number of clubs affiliated to it cut in half due to players and supporters enlisting.⁵³ At its annual meeting in May 1915, the LFA reported that it had lost 44 clubs, down to 101 from the previous year. It also made a loss of almost £100 that year.⁵⁴ Glenavon, the senior club most affected financially by the war, had over 1,000 supporters leave for the front just months after the war began. This rose to 1,400 by April the following year. The club was on the brink of folding.⁵⁵ Demonstrating the large enlistment numbers from Belfast Catholics, over 100 Belfast Celtic supporters joined the Irish Brigade in February 1915 alone, giving a total of 1,800 Celtic supporters who joined the Irish Brigade.⁵⁶ Linfield supporters numbered 'at least 4,000 men in khaki' by

April 1915.⁵⁷ Junior clubs played their part, too. At the 1916 IFA Annual Meeting, the secretary stated, 'It is generally understood that the Junior Clubs of Ireland have rallied wonderfully to the Colours – indeed in some districts junior football has been entirely wiped out'.⁵⁸ A year later the secretary claimed that many junior players 'had made the supreme sacrifice in this awful War'.⁵⁹ It is important to point out that the Irish media was at pains to note the significant contribution of the Irish to the war effort once conscription was introduced in Britain in January 1916, with Ireland excluded.⁶⁰

Although divisional associations and clubs from the north and south contributed to the war effort, as the war progressed, reactions to the war within each location started to diverge dramatically, at least outside of the soccer sphere. Hennessey claims a 'psychological partition' developed during the war with incompatible versions of unionism and nationalism emerging triumphant by the war's end.⁶¹ Reflecting sentiments prevalent amongst the unionist community, the IFA embraced the war effort throughout and after the war. It proudly proclaimed at the 1917 annual meeting that soccer in Ireland had made a fine contribution to 'the great cause for which Britain has entered the War'.⁶² By 1917, such language was rarely used in the south of Ireland. Whilst many unionist members of the IFA believed the war was a glorious sacrifice in the name of the union, particularly after the Battle of the Somme, nationalists, in the wake of the Easter Rising and the continued slaughter on the front, viewed the war in more negative terms. Demonstrating the complexity of the fallout from the war, though, Dublin based clubs embraced the war effort too, and played their part in contributing to its remembrance afterwards.⁶³ It did, however, become more difficult for the Dublin clubs to ignore the change in mood in Ireland caused by the Easter Rising and its aftermath.

Based on the election results of December 1918, all of Ireland outside of the north-east overwhelmingly rejected British rule. Many members of the GAA looked to 'exploit the upsurge of national feelings to try and slow down the growth of soccer'.⁶⁴ A circular was sent by the GAA Central Council in 1917 to every county board, requesting each county 'to take advantage of the present feeling of the country...with the object of completely wiping out "Soccer"'.⁶⁵ A year later, the GAA

even relaxed its ban on members playing or watching ‘foreign games’ in 1918 by offering an amnesty for soccer and rugby players looking to switch from both codes to the GAA.⁶⁶ Many players moved over to the GAA from soccer and rugby because of the perceived attempt by the British administration to “ban” the national pastimes of the GAA.⁶⁷ Leinster and Munster soccer administrators, as well as those in the North-West Association, had to deal with this new reality more so than the IFA in Belfast. Again, this reflects wider society, where Sinn Féin’s influence in Ulster was far weaker than elsewhere in Ireland. To illustrate Sinn Féin’s weakness in Belfast, Hepburn claimed that in June 1920, the police estimated that the United Irish League (successor to the Irish Parliamentary Party) had a membership of 8,000 whilst Sinn Féin only totalled 980 members in the city.⁶⁸

The First World War also led to many practical difficulties for those involved in soccer on the island. There were many ‘bottom-up’ effects of the war. The loss of players and supporters to the war effort, the financial support to different war funds and the general economic turmoil caused by the war affected the finances of the IFA and its affiliated divisions and clubs deeply, particularly in 1914 when it was felt most acutely. All matches saw a significant reduction in gate receipts compared with the corresponding fixture the previous season. A Linfield clash against Belfast Celtic in September 1914 saw a reduction in takings of £112 from the previous season. A Celtic game against Glentoran met with a reduced gate of £40.⁶⁹ The first weekend of October saw similar returns with a decrease of 35 per cent on all fixtures from the same fixtures the previous season.⁷⁰ As mentioned above, Glenavon was the senior club most badly affected financially and it applied for financial assistance to the IFA in January 1915, for a grant of £50. The IFA decided a grant could not be given to the club considering ‘the present circumstances’.⁷¹ After considerable public pressure, the IFA finally relented in April 1915 to offer Glenavon the grant of £50.⁷² Its reluctance to give a senior club close to folding a grant of £50 and its readiness to offer without question its chairman, Wilton, £50, showed to many where the IFA’s priorities lay.

Shelbourne had proposed unsuccessfully, at a meeting of the senior clubs in Belfast, that the receipts for the Irish Cup should be pooled amongst the clubs and the IFA should forego its receipts from the Irish Cup Final and hand them over to the

common pool.⁷³ The IFA lost its largest potential source of income in December 1914 when at a conference of the four home nations, the associations abandoned all international fixtures for the duration of the war.⁷⁴ Although this was a financial blow to the IFA, it had finances available to safeguard it against the impact of the war, unlike many clubs and divisional associations under its fold.⁷⁵ Whilst the IFA was on solid financial footing, as well as Linfield, most divisional associations and clubs, senior and junior, were under great financial strain.⁷⁶ It led to a chasm between them and the IFA authorities in Belfast, perceived to be out of touch, accused by clubs of the 'dilatory manner' in which it dealt with issues during the war.⁷⁷ This sense of abandonment and the struggle to continue was felt most keenly by soccer bodies in Munster and Leinster. In November 1914, the MFA decided to withdraw from soccer for the duration of the war.⁷⁸ The LFA, as soccer became more localised in Ireland, had to drastically change the way it structured its finances.

By the end of the First World War, the spectre of partition for much of Ulster was imminent and support for constitutional politics for most Irish people was on the wane. The War of Independence which commenced almost immediately after the war ended, in January 1919, lasted for over two years, intensifying in violence from the summer of 1920 to the summer of 1921. Concurrently, Belfast and elsewhere in Ulster witnessed wide scale violence from 1920 to 1922, much of it sectarian in nature. Although most sports proclaimed to not be involved in politics, the events that engulfed Ireland immediately after the First World War impacted on the playing and governance of sport. It is important to point out, though, that whilst sport was affected by the war, as Mike Cronin states 'the Irish period of war and revolution was highly localised, and its effects, in comparison with the various ethnic and nation-building struggles happening elsewhere in Europe at the time, were limited'.⁷⁹ Most of the conflict was played out in Dublin, Belfast and Munster. All sports were able to exist and continue as active organisations throughout the conflict, including soccer.

In January 1921, the IFA Protests and Appeal committee decided that both of the semi-finals and the final of the Irish Cup that season should be played in Belfast and not Dublin for safety reasons, much to the chagrin of the Leinster delegate at the meeting.⁸⁰ Despite this, both Linfield and Distillery declared their intentions to

play friendly matches in Dublin in the off-season.⁸¹ The IFA was influenced by the war that had seen sports become a target for Irish Volunteers/the IRA, particularly sports with strong perceived British influences. There was some justification for this stance with many instances of violence, vandalism and intimidation perpetrated against sports patronised by people seen as shoneens, 'a term of abuse regularly employed by Irish separatists to describe members of the upwardly mobile farming or professional classes who stood accused of adopting English ways'.⁸² Immediately after Sinn Féin's victory in the 1918 General Election, the sport of hunting was used by advanced nationalists as a tool to highlight the imprisonment of Sinn Féin members since May 1918, accused of plotting with Germany.⁸³ The campaign involved verbal intimidation and some physical violence, including the shooting of a horse in County Meath.⁸⁴ The campaign spread to other sports such as fishing and horse racing where some meets were abandoned in Punchestown and Fairyhouse.⁸⁵ Michael Byrne, of the Board of Guardians of New Ross in Wexford, even suggested that 'there should not be football any more than hunting until the political prisoners are released'.⁸⁶ So successful was the campaign that by the end of March 1919, according to Paul Rouse, newspapers reported that every hunt outside of Ulster had been stopped.⁸⁷ Later in the year, Sinn Féin threatened to disrupt a hunt in Ulster, in County Down, if General Sir Hackett Pain, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army's Northern District, partook.⁸⁸ He decided not to participate. Republicans also dug up greens of a golf club in County Westmeath and raided a house to prevent a tennis match taking place in County Clare, both instances involved targeting the perceived local elite and British army officers.⁸⁹ Some fatalities resulted, too. In July 1920, Frank Brooke, the senior steward of horse racing's governing body, the Turf Club, was assassinated by the IRA.⁹⁰ He was shot in the middle of the day by three armed men in his office in Dublin city centre.⁹¹ At a cricket match in Trinity College Dublin in June 1921 between the Gentlemen of Ireland and the Military of Ireland, a spectator Kathleen Wright, was shot dead when the IRA opened fire, targeting the cricketers.⁹² Another woman was shot in the arm.⁹³ The most direct and devastating link between sport and the conflict came on Sunday, 21 November 1920, now known as 'Bloody Sunday', when 13 civilians and a player, Michael Hogan, were killed by the RIC and the Auxiliaries in Croke Park, watching a Gaelic football match.⁹⁴ Although the

massacre was perpetrated against civilians by the authorities, the IFA would have been aware of claims, unproven it transpired, that it was the IRA who started the shooting in Croke Park, another sign that Dublin was a haven for lawlessness at sporting events.⁹⁵ The violence affecting sport in Dublin led to the Northern Cricket Union and the Irish Women's Hockey Union cancelling trips for inter-provincial matches due to safety concerns.⁹⁶ On the other hand, rugby circles were not overly concerned by the violence where 'several Belfast sides played in Dublin and were well received'.⁹⁷ In many ways the conflict led to a practical partition within sport, with many fixtures becoming more localised, before the political partition of Ireland.

Soccer matches in Dublin were also not immune to violence during the war. Disturbing scenes occurred at an inter-provincial match between Leinster and Ulster at Dalymount Park in October 1919, with members of the crowd invading the pitch, attacking one of the Ulster players in the process.⁹⁸ At a match between Dublin clubs Jacobs FA and Olympia, players from Jacobs invaded the Olympia dressing room and attacked the club's players.⁹⁹ In April 1921, just hours before Dublin United were due to meet St James' Gate in the Leinster Cup Final, the match was called off by the LFA due to 'the prevailing conditions of the city.'¹⁰⁰ The IFA claimed that Shelbourne had stated it was unwise to host matches in Dublin due to the conflict taking place, citing violence between Glenavon and Shelbourne in Dublin that had occurred a year earlier. This claim was not confirmed by Shelbourne.¹⁰¹ It is important not to overstate the impact of the War of Independence on violence in soccer. From its early days in Ireland, violent incidents and riots were commonplace at soccer matches. The Irish Football League which had been abandoned during the First World War resumed for the 1919/1920 season. The increasing civil unrest led to its postponement again the following season. This once again led to 'severing the football ties between Belfast and Dublin, where the respective administrations had not been afforded enough time to rebuild a functional relationship that had practically ceased to exist a number of years previously'.¹⁰²

Leinster and Munster, more so than the north-east of Ulster, faced formidable challenges in dealing with the political changes that engulfed Ireland from the war onwards. For example, the Munster counties of Cork, Tipperary, Clare and Kerry had the highest fatality rates throughout Ireland for the duration of the

War of Independence.¹⁰³ Even though the military's impact on the game had diminished significantly, detractors still claimed soccer was the 'Garrison Game'.¹⁰⁴ The GAA sought to capitalise on the prevailing mood by enticing members of other sporting codes to join its ranks, particularly from soccer and rugby. The Dublin soccer community's reaction to this challenge also played a part in fomenting division with Belfast. As hostilities intensified, participation in perceived imperialist sports was repeatedly attacked by sections of the population. Even though many republicans and advanced nationalists played and followed soccer and many GAA members did not participate in the War of Independence, demonstrating the identity fluidity within Irish sport, the perception prevailed, increasingly so after the Irish Free State was formed, that republicans only played Gaelic games and followers of "foreign" codes were 'traitors'.¹⁰⁵ This was part of the Irish-Ireland philosophy that dominated nationalism post-1916, embracing all that was Irish and condemning everything foreign, particularly British.

The fact that soccer was headquartered in Belfast with many unionists involved in the IFA posed problems for the soccer community outside of Ulster. Bew's observation that the period of 1920-3 was a 'period so marked by bloody events and intercommunal atrocity as to render almost impossible any attempt at a relatively dispassionate focus on political and ideological discourse', holds true for those involved in sport too.¹⁰⁶ The secretary of the Ulster GAA Council and leading member of the IRA in Ulster, Eoin O'Duffy, called soccer:

The game of the British Garrison, the atmosphere surrounding it is anglicised, and no one can contradict me when I say that the enemies of Irish Freedom patronise and finance it. Ireland asks her sons to play and support our National games; the friends of the Empire ask you to play and support Soccer – make your choice, and for goodness sake do it at once. We welcome every Irishman to our fold who has a pride in the ancient traditions of our race and who, to preserve our individuality, is prepared to cast aside everything which means to make us slaves to the mannerisms of an alien race.¹⁰⁷

This rankled with many volunteers who also played and supported soccer, most notably former professional footballer Oscar Traynor who fought in the Easter Rising, the War of Independence and subsequent Civil War. The experiences of Traynor and many others demonstrate the many complexities involved between sport and people's identities. Traynor 'refused to acknowledge the supposed incompatibility of

his Irish republicanism with his preference for soccer'.¹⁰⁸ He wrote an article in the late 1920s in the *Football Sports Weekly* citing many examples of prominent republicans such as Cathal Brugha, Kevin Barry, Emmet Dalton, Michael Chadwick and Jim Slattery who played soccer, cricket and rugby. He claimed that 'soccer players, officials, and fans played a very important part in the fight for freedom, 1916–1921'.¹⁰⁹ Jack Shouldice, a prominent member of the GAA in Dublin claimed that 'sporting and non-sporting bodies, or members of them, contributed their quota to the Volunteers and IRA – Soccer, Rugby, Gaelic League, National University, Literary and Press organisations were represented, especially in Dublin where these bodies were strong'.¹¹⁰ Gerald Boland, brother of prominent GAA and IRA member Harry, asserted that 'more than half of the Dublin Brigade [of the IRA] 1918–1921 were soccer men'.¹¹¹ Undoubtedly, this is an exaggeration of the prominence of 'soccer men', just as the GAA's prominence during the revolutionary years has been embellished by the GAA. William Murphy claims 'the GAA appears to have been a playground of the revolution more often than it was a player in the revolution'.¹¹² There is little doubt, though, that many soccer players, administrators and supporters backed Sinn Féin and the IRA, as did most Irish people outside of Ulster based on the 1918 General Election results, a factor that cannot be ignored in shaping opinions towards the IFA in Belfast. Irish republicans who played soccer felt under pressure to prove their nationalism. They 'had to work "twice as hard" as their peers in the GAA to prove their nationalist credentials'.¹¹³ Administrators included a senior Shelbourne football club administrator who was a personal friend of Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin.¹¹⁴ Sir Osmond Thomas Grattan Esmonde, future president of the LFA and FAI, was a supporter of Sinn Féin who played key diplomatic and political roles for the party.¹¹⁵

The make-up of the LFA council was comprised of people from many backgrounds, religions, and political viewpoints, diluting the prospects of universal agreement on national political issues. Members of the council included Robert E.T. Richey, a Methodist originally from Antrim; Robert Balbirnie, an Anglican; Roman Catholics including the secretary Jack Ryder, Robert Lovell Edgeworth, and Henry McSherry; and Harry Wigoder, a Jew originally from Russia.¹¹⁶ J.S. Smurthwaite, who became Treasurer of the newly formed FAI, originally from the north of England, was

Personnel Manager of Jacob's biscuit factory.¹¹⁷ This diverse make-up was somewhat different to the make-up of the IFA council which, although never overt, veered towards unionism. James Wilton, the IFA chairman, was secretary of the Derry division of the UVF during the home rule crisis before the First World War.¹¹⁸ He was elected as an Ulster Unionist to the Derry Corporation in 1923 and in 1935 he became Lord Mayor of Derry City.¹¹⁹ Council member Thomas Moles was managing editor of the *Belfast Telegraph* and unionist MP for Ormeau in the Westminster parliament from 1918.¹²⁰ Another council member, Thompson Gamble MacBride, was secretary of the Municipal Unionist Association of Belfast.¹²¹ Unquestionably, the different political viewpoints of those involved in soccer in Dublin to those involved in Belfast, was a factor in creating clashes.

Although the IFA frequently claimed it was a non-political organisation, it became embroiled in a controversy directly related to the conflict in Ireland in February 1921, at an international amateur match between Ireland and France in Paris. At the match, an attempt was made by a section of the crowd to have the Irish team walk behind Sinn Féin flags on taking the pitch.¹²² The IFA officials at the match, in conjunction with the French authorities, prevented this from happening and had the people responsible removed from the ground. The four Leinster members of the team 'felt that a slur had been cast on them as being silent participants in an affair of which they had no knowledge whatever at the time'.¹²³ At an IFA Council meeting, 'Several Dublin representatives pointed out that politics had never been introduced into football in Dublin, and much damage had been done as a result of the incident.'¹²⁴ Highlighting the pressure the soccer community in Dublin was under, the *Irish News* claimed that:

In Dublin Soccer was not favoured by some of the community, and this incident had given rise to much criticism. The incident might have been the means of wiping Soccer out of Leinster...players were leaving Soccer in Dublin and going over to Rugby and other codes. The incident had placed the Soccer officials in a very awkward position.¹²⁵

James Wilton replied that the flags and the people responsible were removed from the ground as the IFA was 'a non-political, non-religious body'.¹²⁶ Disagreeing, the *Catholic Bulletin* stated, 'The incident revealed the "bitter anti-Irish atmosphere of

Association football” and the air of “slavery in which all important Association matches were played””.¹²⁷ The *Irish Field* described it as:

Another incident magnified to intensity that hatred of anything emanating from the North. It may be that pressure from certain quarters down South is proving too much for the Leinster Association and its clubs to withstand...I know the members of the body there have a hard time of it, in the face of the calumny of Northerners.¹²⁸

Although flags and emblems had been banned from soccer matches since the September 1912 riot between Linfield and Belfast Celtic, the heightened tensions on the island in 1921 led to the ‘Flag Incident’ turning into a full-blown controversy. The IFA again showed no awareness of the difficulties facing the soccer community outside of its Belfast orbit.

Most Protestants and unionists in Belfast were, on a whole, reliant for their news on three newspapers, the *Belfast Telegraph*, the *Belfast Newsletter*, and the *Northern Whig*.¹²⁹ Belfast newspapers were quick to report on atrocities being committed against civilians in Dublin and elsewhere in the south and there were many to report during the War of Independence.¹³⁰ Instead of highlighting the frequent violence occurring in Belfast, the *Belfast Telegraph*’s headlines in early 1921 focused on atrocities in southern Ireland such as ‘Criminal Methods of the IRA’, ‘Terrorism in Cork’, ‘Murderer’s Escape in Dublin’ and ‘Inevitable Weekend in Dublin.’¹³¹ In many ways, Protestants and unionists in north-east Ulster were living in an entirely different world compared to Catholics and nationalists in the south, where interaction was minimal. Martin’s assertion that in 1914, ‘the Irish factions had been unable to agree. By 1918, they were unable even to talk’, was borne out by the widening gulf between Dublin and Belfast in 1921.¹³² Reading of such incidents, it is not surprising that people in Belfast would feel Dublin was unsafe. There was, though, little thought from the IFA given to those travelling to Belfast from Dublin where the violence against civilians was on a wider scale.¹³³

Robert Lynch estimates that over 450 people were killed and over 1,100 were wounded in Belfast from 1920 to 1922, a higher per capita death rate than in any other part of the country during the same period.¹³⁴ There were incidents in Belfast directly linked to soccer matches too. Immediately after a match at the Cliftonville Football Ground in August 1920, a riot broke out amongst fans in the surrounding

areas, leading to the deaths of five men and one woman.¹³⁵ Two months later a crowd of 3,000 loyalists who had attended a match at the same ground attacked a Catholic church. The ensuing altercation led to the deaths of three men.¹³⁶ According to J.J. Murray, an Irish Volunteer based in Armagh, at the time of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, an IRA unit opened fire on a train carrying the Linfield soccer team.¹³⁷

The IFA council members may not have been fully aware of all of the violence engulfing Belfast but it is not credible that they were not aware of the violent incidents at soccer matches in Belfast and elsewhere in Ulster. The violence in the city certainly was resoundingly made clear when a council member, B. Beggs, was severely wounded by gunshot fire because of the troubles in June 1922.¹³⁸ Due to the violence in Belfast and places such as Derry, IFA meetings had to finish by 9:30pm because of curfew restrictions, a clear sign that violence was prevalent in those locations.¹³⁹

The impact of the national political environment was most keenly felt by Belfast Celtic, the leading nationalist-leaning club in the city. The turmoil in the city led to its withdrawal from soccer activities for four years, from 1920. In March 1919, the Irish Cup semi-final between Glentoran and Belfast Celtic had to be abandoned after Celtic fans broke through the railings, invaded the pitch, singing the nationalist 'The Soldier's Song' and assaulting the referee and Glentoran players with stones.¹⁴⁰ At a Belfast City Cup contest between Celtic and Distillery in January 1920, the ground was invaded by spectators at the end of the match, the police and officials being forced to protect the referee.¹⁴¹ The ugliest incident that occurred was at an Irish Cup semi-final replay match, another match between Glentoran and Belfast Celtic in March 1920, the most serious occurrence since the mass riot in Celtic Park of September 1912. During the match, a section of the Celtic crowd, who had been singing party songs and waving Sinn Féin flags throughout the match, started to throw stones, soon followed by the firing of guns. Many people were injured, three were detained in hospital, one suffering from a fractured skull.¹⁴² Whilst the IFA tried to hold an apolitical line, it was powerless to prevent the sectarian tensions boiling over at club matches.

The IFA Senior Clubs Protests and Appeals Committee subsequently met and disqualified both clubs from the Irish Cup.¹⁴³ The Celtic directors were disgruntled with the decision and even more perturbed by the decision of the IFA Emergency Committee to suspend the club from taking part in soccer as well as threatening the deduction of gate receipts owed to Celtic for damage caused by the riot. The club threatened legal action against the IFA, taking its case against the IFA to the Chancery Court in June.¹⁴⁴ Over the following months, both parties sought to resolve the dispute, with the IFA eventually agreeing in October to cover Celtic's legal costs. However, it refused to rescind the decisions made in March.¹⁴⁵ The treatment of Belfast Celtic by the IFA was seen as another example by nationalists of the IFA being an anti-nationalist, pro-unionist body. The directors of Celtic decided that same year, 'in view of recent events they would not undertake the responsibility of reviving a team next season', and withdrew from soccer for another four years, it being felt it was too unsafe to do so beforehand.¹⁴⁶

During the Irish revolutionary years, sports were impacted by the significant national events that occurred, including soccer. Given the scale of changes that occurred in Irish society at the time, it is not credible to suggest otherwise. The vast gulf that widened between north and south in this period posed many problems for the soccer community, a sport popular amongst nationalists and unionists. On the face of it there was an incompatibly issue between those within the Dublin soccer community who supported and, in some cases, fought for the IRA on the one hand and who were governed by the IFA in Belfast, many who held unionist positions, on the other. It is important to reiterate, though, that the dynamics within and between communities were more complex and as Hopkinson has argued, people were more flexible than many historians have asserted.¹⁴⁷ The primary reason for the split was internal political matters (see Chapter Four) but the national political environment did have a negative impact on the unity of the game for the island of Ireland. Although rarely mentioned in correspondence and meetings between the IFA and the LFA, there is little doubt that the wholly different worldviews emanating from Belfast and Dublin impacted on the soccer community too. Added to this was the IFA's decision yet again to favour the north over the south. The IFA Council members may have genuinely feared for the safety of players from the north travelling to

Dublin, with some justification considering the violence at some sporting events. That they were either unaware or uninterested in the reciprocal problems faced by players travelling from the south to Belfast demonstrates the Belfast bubble they operated in. This certainly was the view of the soccer community in Dublin.

Geography

The 'otherness' of the north to the south was compounded during the upheavals that impacted on Irish society in the decade from 1912 onwards. North and south were 'increasingly out of sympathy' as they became more 'out of touch'.¹⁴⁸ Whilst this may have been true politically, there still were many social and cultural bonds and connections that tied Northern Protestants to people from the south through religion, education, business and sport,¹⁴⁹ which firmly challenges the 'previously accepted assumptions about the one-way flow of culture, identity, and institutions'.¹⁵⁰ Before the split of 1921, soccer ran competitions on an all-Ireland basis. This was abandoned, however, for much of the duration of the First World War with the creation of localised leagues in Leinster and Belfast. It resulted in Leinster and the IFA becoming 'increasingly out of sympathy' with each other the more they were 'out of touch', and was an important factor in Leinster eventually seceding from the IFA permanently in 1921.

The different leagues of the home nations held a conference on 3 July 1915 in Blackpool, England to discuss the continuance or not of soccer for the duration of the war. At the conference, the delegates decided that there would be divisional competitions in England and Scotland, but no national competitions to take place whilst the war was ongoing. Dublin club Bohemians agreed with this stance believing 'it would be a disgrace to play competitive football, which might attract players from employment'. Bohemians withdrew from the Irish League. Shelbourne was also forced to do so as it was too impractical for players from Dublin to expect to travel to Belfast and back again every second week and retain another full-time job also during the weekdays.¹⁵¹ With the two senior clubs from Dublin no longer available, the IFA decided to localise soccer in Ireland. Soccer in Ireland was divided into two distinct bodies. The Leinster League continued and the senior clubs in Ulster formed a local league in Belfast, called the Belfast and District League, with the Irish Football League deciding that Lurgan-based team Glenavon in County Armagh also had to play all of its games in Belfast. The leading nationalist club in the city,

Belfast Celtic decided not to participate in the new league as it believed soccer should be played on an amateur basis during the war.¹⁵² Belfast United, comprising of many Belfast Celtic players, took its place in the Belfast and District League. Restricted to local competition (with the exception of the national cup competitions), the LFA was forced to revive its financial rules for the Leinster Cup. From 1916 it insisted on 50 per cent of gate receipts from semi-final ties and 80 per cent from the final.¹⁵³

The Irish Cup Competition continued as normal, with one exception. The IFA Emergency Committee ruled that all Irish Cup ties would take place in Belfast as it was not possible for Belfast players who were engaged in munitions work to travel to Dublin.¹⁵⁴ Realising this decision would be poorly received in Dublin, it justified it by claiming:

it is recognised that the arrangement imposes some hardship upon Dublin teams in the matter of travelling, but no other course is open. Dublin footballers are not handicapped in the same way, since munition and other Government work is not carried on in Dublin at present to the same degree, and footballer players there are not, it is understood, appreciably affected.¹⁵⁵

Although the amount of munitions work in Belfast was far greater than in Dublin, there still was considerable munitions work in the capital, particularly for 'soft' munitions such as uniforms. Most players from Dublin clubs were engaged in employment too making it as difficult for them to take time off to travel to Belfast and back again, a point seemingly lost on the IFA authorities.¹⁵⁶

The first season under the new structure saw the IFA experience the lowest number of clubs affiliated to it for some time. By the end of the 1915-16 season there were just 140 clubs in the IFA, 81 less than the previous season.¹⁵⁷ The LFA suffered likewise with many teams disbanding and the clubs in existence primarily reliant on localised competition. By 1916 the number of clubs affiliated to the LFA, which stood at almost 150 in 1914, had been cut in half.¹⁵⁸ As the war progressed, the outlook for the IFA improved. Clubs affiliated to the IFA increased from 140 in 1916 to 179 in 1917 and up to 259 in 1918.¹⁵⁹ According to Mark Tynan:

There was little sign of revival within the Dublin game during the second half of the war period, and the desperate position of association football in the capital deteriorated even further between 1917 and 1918. By the beginning of 1918 attendances for games involving Bohemians, arguably Dublin's most famous and popular club, were as low as 600.¹⁶⁰

When the IFA claimed at its annual meeting in 1918 that ‘the game has not suffered any very serious consequences’ and it had a ‘very flourishing Balance Sheet’, it was clearly speaking on behalf of Belfast, certainly not of Munster nor Leinster.¹⁶¹ Tynan also argues that this ‘insular outlook clearly portrays the IFA’s indifference to the game outside of its north-eastern stronghold’.¹⁶²

The enforced geographical division of soccer for the duration of the war transpired to be a detrimental one for the governance of the sport on an all-Ireland basis. For the first time in its history, the Leinster authorities had almost total autonomy in how it conducted its affairs with its affiliated clubs. With little interaction from the IFA, it was able to set its own fixtures, appoint referees, deal with disciplinary issues, run its own competitions. Essentially, the LFA became self-sufficient. Unwittingly, the IFA had granted new powers to the Leinster body, powers it increasingly was reluctant to abandon. The enforced geographic devolution of soccer in Ireland in essence made the LFA independent of the parent body, an independence it sought to assert further in the years following the First World War.

Internal Politics

Whilst it is clear the national political environment impacted on the unity of the game during the turbulent revolutionary decade, the experiences and concerns on the ground for many in the soccer community were issues relating to internal governance. Politically, the decade saw great change and upheaval. Soccer experienced great changes too but the disagreements within the IFA remained consistently focused on internal political matters.

Ireland won the British Home Championship outright for the first time in its history in 1914, months before the outbreak of the First World War. Unlike previous international teams that reflected a bias towards Belfast-born and -based players, the 1914 team had a truly all-Ireland flavour to it. Of the ‘15 players who played at least once that season, 5 were born in Belfast and Dublin, 2 in Galway, 1 in Wexford and 1, Louis Bookman, moved from his native Russia (present day Lithuania) at a young age to Dublin’.¹⁶³ This young united team was unable to repeat its success due to the start of the war. An opportunity to demonstrate what more a united team could achieve was lost. Ireland did not play another international match for over five years, when it played against England in October 1919 and by then the selection policy had reverted to ignoring Leinster based players. The intervention of the war

saw that key issue of international selection change from being one where there was unity in Irish soccer to becoming yet again a reason for division.

During the war period, other disagreements between Leinster and the IFA became more frequent and more entrenched, a further sign that Leinster was no longer willing to be subservient to the parent body. It also demonstrates the primacy of internal politics in causing the rift in Irish soccer. The IFA was accused by the LFA in December of making a 'grievous error' in changing the date of the second-round ties of the Irish Intermediate Cup from 2 January to 9 January 1915, the date the first-round of the Leinster Senior Cup was scheduled to commence.¹⁶⁴ The LFA sent a letter to the IFA in January 1915 complaining about Dublin club St James' Gate exclusion from the Irish Cup, even though the club had won the Irish Intermediate Cup in 1910. The IFA wrote back stating 'that the opinion of the Council was that St. James' Gate would be better drawn in the Intermediate Cup Competition'.¹⁶⁵ The IFA also claimed that St James's Gate 'were scarcely competent for such a competition as the Irish Cup'.¹⁶⁶ This response was strongly criticised by the Leinster delegates at the following council meeting who claimed the issue would be up for discussion in May when the Annual Meeting was due to be held in Dublin. Larry Sheridan of the LFA, in a scathing attack on the IFA, 'asked was the Association really intended for the furtherance of football'.¹⁶⁷ A suggestion of some Ulster council members to relocate the Annual Meeting from Dublin to 'curtail expenditure' was met with deep disapproval from Leinster delegates.¹⁶⁸

The IFA Annual Meeting took place in Molesworth Street in Dublin in May 1915. It turned out to be a momentous meeting with Dublin club Olympia FC proposing sweeping changes to the governance of soccer in Ireland, changes sought to increase Leinster's power. Unsurprisingly, most of them were rejected by the IFA. Some of the changes proposed included; affiliated associations to retain three-fourths of their club's affiliation fees, instead of one-half; an increase in Leinster's representation to the IFA Council from three to five delegates; an increase in the IFA Council (directly elected) from fourteen to sixteen members; a reduction of the fee for obtaining the opinion of the IFA Council from five shillings to one shilling; the devolution of power to Divisional Associations from the IFA Council for the Rules of League and alliances; the protests and referees' reports in matches played under the Divisional Associations to be taken from the jurisdiction of the IFA Protest and Appeals Committee, and dealt with by Divisional Associations; Leinster to have four

delegates on the IFA Junior Committee instead of three; an increase in Leinster's representation on the International Selection Committee; a new article to allow clubs from the First Division of the Leinster League to enter the Irish Cup; copies of the IFA balance sheet to be forwarded to clubs seven days before the annual meeting; and a Junior Trial International match to be played annually between teams representative of the north and south.¹⁶⁹ It is unclear as to why Olympia proposed such sweeping proposals, with the support of the LFA. Perhaps it was done to provoke a reaction from the IFA or to foment division. The newspaper *Sport* believed it was necessary to bring about changes to the IFA in line with Olympia's proposals: 'Belfast...has ruled the roost too long, and no time in the history of the IFA has been so opportune as the present to rouse them up'.¹⁷⁰ There was a perception in Dublin that Olympia's proposals were creating panic in Belfast, particularly the article to allow Leinster clubs such as St. James' Gate entry into the Irish Cup, and the Belfast clubs travelled to Dublin in numbers to vote down all of the proposals.¹⁷¹ Most of Olympia's proposals were defeated at an Extraordinary General Meeting held immediately after the annual meeting of 1915. Proposals that were passed by the IFA included increased representation for Leinster on the Junior committee and the Junior International subcommittee, as well as a trial match between a team from the northern divisions against a team from the southern divisions to select the junior international team.¹⁷² Commenting on the results, *Sport* bemoaned "Belfast's" treatment of "Dublin", failing even to recognise the increased Leinster representation within junior football.¹⁷³

The IFA came in for criticism from many quarters, not just Dublin representatives, throughout the war for its *laissez faire* attitude to governance. At a rancorous IFA annual meeting in May 1917, the parent body was attacked by many delegates for its handling of the Junior and Intermediate Cup competitions, its 'grab-all' policy of taking most of the finances from cup finals, its acceptance of bogus clubs as registered clubs and its bizarre policy of allowing divisional associations such as Munster and Fermanagh and Western to have divisional representation without any clubs registered or registered clubs that were actually playing Gaelic games and not soccer.¹⁷⁴

When the war ended, many clubs and divisional associations were in dire straits. Localised league competitions were still in operation with the Dublin clubs opting not to re-join the Irish League. Leinster based clubs just participated in the All-Ireland cup competitions.¹⁷⁵ The main topic of discussion at the annual meeting of 1919 centred on

helping those most in need of financial assistance. Leinster representative Harry Wigoder, proposed, unsuccessfully, the sum of £200 'be granted to the Munster Football Association for the furtherance of football in Munster'.¹⁷⁶ Another recommendation from a Leinster delegate, Richey, citing the plight of Dublin clubs Strandville and Franfort, to reduce the affiliation fees owed to the IFA by the divisional associations by 50 per cent was also defeated within the IFA.¹⁷⁷ Delegates also decided at the annual meeting to set up a Commission 'to consider ways and means of fostering the spread of Association Football throughout Ireland' with a fund not exceeding £1,000 to be distributed to clubs and associations who had suffered financially during the war.¹⁷⁸ The establishment of this commission does appear as a genuine attempt by the IFA to help clubs and divisional associations detrimentally impacted by the war. The Annual Report mentioned that, 'The Semi-Finals [of the Irish Cup] were the most successful in the history of the Cup, and for the first time since the outbreak of the War one of these matches was played in Dublin, the Belfast Clubs sportingly agreeing to this being done'.¹⁷⁹

The IFA Council tasked the Commission representatives with producing a report within four weeks of the annual meeting.¹⁸⁰ The secretary of the IFA Charles Watson, wrote to the divisional associations of the North-East, Leinster, Mid-Ulster, North-West and Fermanagh and Western enquiring on what funding each division required. There was no mention of the MFA being sent similar correspondence.¹⁸¹ Jack Ryder, secretary of the LFA, replied:

Since the War some very prominent Clubs went out of existence through no fault of their own, and the number of Clubs affiliated has fallen by one half...if a sum of £300 was allocated to the L.F.A. it would help to revive and foster the game in this district and much good work could be done. I might mention that we at present suffer opposition from other quarters [the GAA], which has to be worn down.¹⁸²

The IFA received no replies from the North-East, Mid-Ulster or Fermanagh and Western Associations. The Commission offered Leinster £200 instead of the sought after £300, Mid-Ulster £150 and the North-West £75. It 'had no information before them regarding the condition of Football in the Fermanagh and Munster Districts, and, therefore, were not in a position to make any recommendations in regard to these Divisions'.¹⁸³ Watson reported at an IFA Council meeting in November, that many efforts were subsequently made to get in touch with officials from the MFA,

without success, and it was left to the Commission tasked with the furtherance of the game to deal with the matter.¹⁸⁴ Both Neal Garnham and Peter Byrne claim Leinster was offered just £50 instead of £300, a figure that was startling and insulting, and Byrne claims Munster sought £200 and received nothing.¹⁸⁵ The evidence suggests otherwise. Leinster received £200 from the IFA, not quite the asked-for £300, still the largest sum given to any divisional association. Wigoder from Leinster had proposed £200 to be granted to Munster at the 1919 IFA annual meeting, a proposal defeated and opposed by delegates from Leinster.¹⁸⁶ Watson claimed he had tried on many occasions over a five-month period to reach out to the MFA, to get input on what Munster needed, without any joy. In January 1920, Watson attempted to contact someone from 'the late Munster Football Association' on two separate occasions through advertisements in the *Cork Examiner* and no one from Munster responded.¹⁸⁷ There were many occasions when the criticisms levelled against the IFA's treatment of clubs and divisional associations outside of Antrim were justified. There were other times, as with the post-war Commission example, where the IFA was not the primary culprit for division.

The LFA also felt aggrieved by a number of decisions made by the IFA after the First World War had ended, most relating to venues for matches. A motion put forward by the Leinster delegates to host the international match against Wales for the 1920 season was defeated by the IFA by twelve votes to six, and it was held in Belfast instead.¹⁸⁸ Months later another attempt by the LFA to host an amateur international in Dublin was also thwarted by the parent body, Belfast again being chosen as the venue.¹⁸⁹ The last senior international held in Dublin under the governance of the IFA was in 1913. None were held after the First World War. The decision of the IFA Protests and Appeals Committee in January 1921 to host both semi-finals and the final in Belfast for 1921 was seen as yet another example by the LFA of a Belfast bias within the association. As well as dictating that the key Irish Cup ties be played in Belfast, the IFA reneged on a promise to grant Dublin an Intermediate Cup semi-final tie, as both semi-finals were played in Belfast.¹⁹⁰ St James's Gate, the holders of the Intermediate Cup withdrew from the competition as a result, refusing to travel to Belfast to meet Forth River.¹⁹¹ The Junior Cup semi-final ties were also awarded to Belfast.¹⁹²

The IFA International Selection Committee continued its policy of favouring Belfast-based over Dublin-based players for selection for the international team. After the First World War, just one cap was won by a player playing for a Dublin club before the split of 1921, when Ned Brooks from Shelbourne played against Scotland in 1920. Shelbourne won the Irish Cup in 1920. In that same period 23 caps were won by players playing for Ulster-based clubs.¹⁹³ In one instance, the IFA failed to 'contact a Dublin-based player regarding his selection for junior international duty in May 1919...the association claimed that it did not know where the player in question lived and had not seen fit to make enquiries to find the necessary information'.¹⁹⁴ Other issues relating to the internal machinations of soccer in Ireland revolved around finances. The LFA believed the IFA was a drain on its resources and its belief that the parent body was biased towards Belfast clubs only amplified this problem. The Dublin clubs also claimed that it 'cost almost twice as much for a Dublin club to host a northern team as it did for the northerners to host them'.¹⁹⁵ Leinster's dependence on the IFA and the attractiveness of hosting Belfast teams was fast diminishing. Leinster's autonomy was yet again restored when Shelbourne and Bohemians withdrew from the Irish Football League for the 1920-21 season. Regardless of the divisions caused by the national political environment, internal issues continually gnawed away at the IFA's control of the game in the south.

The IFA clearly viewed the LFA as a junior partner and soccer in Leinster as inferior. In this way, the IFA shared the stereotypical view held by many Ulster unionists that they were superior to southerners. Loughlin quotes one prominent unionist declaring that the difference between Ulster and the rest of Ireland was like 'the difference between a field of lilies and a factory of looms. In three of the provinces they toil not, neither do they spin. But in Ulster they do both'.¹⁹⁶ By 1921, Leinster's bitterness towards the IFA in how it was treated reached a stage where the LFA would no longer remain subservient to the parent body.

Conclusion

Through the prism of soccer, it has been shown how 'great events affected the lives of ordinary people'.¹⁹⁷ By analysing the impact events such as the home rule crisis, the First World War, the Easter Rising and the War of Independence had on soccer administrators,

players and supporters, an integrated example is provided on how events from the political centre impacted on the lived experiences of ordinary people. Here the combining of events from high politics and ‘people’s responses to them’ demonstrates they are both intertwined.¹⁹⁸

The crisis precipitated by the introduction of the home rule bill in 1912 served to highlight the centrality of religion and politics within soccer. Above other sports, it was enjoyed by Protestants and Catholics, by unionists and nationalists. Although the governing body attempted to steer a neutral course on political and sectarian matters, the dominance of Protestants and unionists within the Belfast-located IFA saw it veer occasionally off course in favour of its dominant base. The clubs under the IFA’s governance, particularly in Belfast, were more prone to be involved in sectarian and political tensions. Whilst the IFA could steer a course towards consensus and the middle ground, the clubs reflecting the communities they were identified with, got drawn into the political polarisation between the unionist and nationalist communities from 1912 onwards. Soccer in Ireland could not be divorced from the national political environment that engulfed the country from 1912.

The First World War affected the soccer community in Ireland in many ways. Many lives were lost, more were wounded, from the thousands from its fold that went to the front. Clubs struggled financially with many forced to disband. With key figures from the IFA leaving for the front, the IFA experienced a leadership deficit during the war years. The soccer example backs-up Fitzpatrick and others in showing the complexity of the volunteer make-up to the front.¹⁹⁹ Soccer players from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, from north and south, volunteered in large numbers. Whilst many in the south sought to expunge the war experience from collective memory, Dublin-based clubs continued to remember the war subsequently.

The ‘psychological partition’ that Hennessey argues which developed during the war years between the nationalist and unionist communities was also evident in the soccer community. Like most nationalists, many in the soccer community who supported the home rule movement had by the war’s end switched allegiances to Sinn Féin, a brand of nationalism even less appealing to unionists than the constitutional nationalism espoused by the Irish Party. The Anglo-Irish War of Independence showed how the soccer community reflected Irish society at the time with many Dublin-based soccer players and supporters joining and following the IRA on the one hand in direct contrast to the mainly-unionist

supporting IFA on the other. Bew's claim that it was not a period for compromise nor nuance was demonstrated through the vastly different experiences and perceptions emanating from Belfast and Dublin within the soccer community at the time.²⁰⁰ Such was the atmosphere, that occurrences such as the 'Flag Incident' in February 1921 escalated to full-blown controversies.

It is important to note that the national political environment clearly had a negative impact on maintaining unity within the sport in Ireland. It exacerbated pre-existing divisions. There can be no doubt that the national political climate loomed large in decisions made by soccer administrators, north and south, during this turbulent period, and therefore has to be considered a significant reason that led to the split. It is also important to add, though, that there was more flexibility, as will be shown in Chapter Four, and the dynamics within and between communities were more complex than historians have previously argued. The political polarisation was not matched by social and cultural ones on the island, by and large. An internal decision to enforce geographic devolution of soccer in Ireland for the duration of the First World War was in many ways more decisive in causing divisions than events from the political centre. The historical issues of an internal political nature continued to gnaw away at the unity of the game. The LFA was bitter and resentful over matters relating to international player and venue selection, and finances. It no longer accepted its perceived status as an inferior body to the IFA. Regardless of all of the external factors of a national political nature that were affecting the soccer community at the time, internal factors continued to foment division within Irish soccer. The national political environment facilitated division but it was the internal factors that were most decisive in bringing it about. These factors combined to create the febrile atmosphere, threatened many times before, that led to the split in Irish soccer in 1921.

Chapter Four – The Split and its Aftermath (1921-1932)

Introduction

The split in Irish soccer happened as Ireland was being partitioned in 1921. Although the national political environment was a factor in fomenting division, it is a stretch to claim the partitioning of Ireland caused the split in soccer. It is in this context that it is important to write the history of borders and partitions free from ‘the iron grip of the nation-state’ and to interpret borders as ‘places where states, individuals, and various groups interact within the contexts created in part by institutionally defined borders’.¹ The partition of Ireland was a complex and confusing settlement. What follows is, in the words of Peter Leary, an attempt ‘to understand the complex of multidimensional and multidirectional governmental and societal relationships characteristic of international boundaries and their hinterlands’.² Organisations and societies were allowed great freedom and flexibility in how they reacted to the political division of the island. Evidence is presented here that supports Readman, Radding and Bryant’s assertion that ‘the social experience of borderlands suggests that the reality was more complex, that national allegiances could be ambivalent, weak, trumped by other loyalties, and reflexively adjustable depending on circumstances’.³ Sahlin has shown that even borders that are considered stable, like the Pyrenean frontier between France and Spain, are alive and contested through local disputes.⁴

The key focus here is to analyse the split directly and its aftermath up to 1932, when the IFA and FAI made the last meaningful attempt to re-unify the sport. It focuses on the immediate reasons for the split in Irish soccer. The primacy of intra-governance politics is clear in the way the structures and actions of the IFA council and its sub-committees were perceived within the Irish soccer community, particularly within Leinster. Evidence is presented here of how the border in Ireland was interpreted within the soccer community, an example of integrating the bottom-up and the top-down histories of the partition of Ireland.

Soccer in Ireland had a number of opportunities to reunite during the first decade after partition, a scenario which in itself explains the complexities involved in the ‘myriad of reactions, counter-reactions, and interactions’ from people and organisations to partition.⁵ Those attempts to reunite demonstrate how factors such as the national political environment, internal politics, geography and international sporting politics had in fomenting or diminishing division.

Internal Politics

The direct reason that led to the split was an issue that highlighted the deep internal divisions within the IFA between the parent body and the LFA in Dublin. Due to the ruling of the IFA's Senior Clubs' Protest and Appeals committee in January 1921 that Dublin clubs had to travel to Belfast for Irish Cup ties for that season, Shelbourne played Glenavon in an Irish Cup semi-final in Belfast on 5 March. With the match in Belfast resulting in a draw, many within the LFA believed that the replay would be played in Dublin. This was not the case. Shelbourne were asked by the IFA to travel again to Belfast. At a meeting of the Protests and Appeals committee held on 7 March, the IFA 'decided to replay the match at Belfast on Wednesday 16th March', again based on its decision earlier in the year that Dublin clubs had to travel to Belfast for matches.⁶ This decision by the Protest and Appeals committee, yet again demonstrating an inherent bias towards Belfast, led the LFA to secede from the IFA.

Many of the grievances and reasons for disputes between the LFA and IFA, that ultimately resulted in the former leaving the latter, were caused by the make-up of the IFA council and its sub-committees, and the decisions made by those bodies. The make-up of the IFA sub-committees, such as the Protests and Appeals, Finance, Emergency and International Committees, revealed a heavy bias towards the North-East division and other divisional associations within the northern region. Reflecting the geographic dimension to soccer in Ireland, every IFA committee was dominated by Ulster delegates, particularly from the North-East division of Antrim and Down which incorporated Belfast. In contrast, Leinster, Munster and Fermanagh and Western had limited representation on any committee. In fact, some of the delegates representing Munster and Fermanagh and Western were not even from those regions. They felt it was too impractical to travel to Belfast for meetings. Other than annual meetings being rotated in different locations each year, the IFA Council and its sub-committees held every meeting in Belfast. Thomas Moles served on the IFA Council and some of its sub-committees as a delegate for both Munster and Fermanagh and Western at different junctures.⁷ Appendix A lists all of the IFA sub-committees from the 1909-10 to the 1920-21 seasons with each committee membership broken down by divisional association.⁸

In many instances, membership of sub-committees consisted of over half the delegates hailing from the North-East region. The composition of practically every sub-committee of the IFA had the bulk of its members coming from the North-East, the North-West and the Mid-Ulster regions, with just a few delegates, if any, from the other regions. Leinster overtook the North-East as the largest divisional association in 1913 and yet its representation on the parent body's sub-committees did not reflect this. In 1913, the Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements committee was composed of seven members, three from the North-East, just one from Leinster. The International committee, a vital one due to its role in choosing the national team, was also composed of seven members in 1913, with just one from Leinster and three from the North-East. The other three delegates were from the North-West, Mid-Ulster and Fermanagh and Western, making it very difficult for one solitary Leinster delegate to ask for more Dublin-based players on the international team. Leinster had one member out of six on the Advisory committee that same year and had no representation on the Finance, Emergency, Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals, and Rules Revision committees. The MFA had no representation on any sub-committee in 1913. The dominant North-East region, as well as having three members on the Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements and International committees, had four out of eight members on the Finance committee, three out of six on the Emergency committee, five out of five on the Senior League Clubs' Protests and Appeals committee, two out of three on the Rules Revision committee and two out of six on the Advisory committee.⁹

By 1921, very little had changed. All committees were dominated by North-East representatives, including the Senior League Clubs' Protests and Appeals committee which had five out of eight members compared to two from Leinster.¹⁰ Given the north-east's pre-eminence in the game and that the IFA was headquartered in Belfast, it is not surprising that the region had large representation. The scale of that representation was certainly off-putting for other regions, though. There was very little the Leinster delegates could do to halt the decision of that committee to hold the semi-final and final ties in Belfast for 1921, considering their numerical disadvantage. This is in stark contrast to other sporting bodies in Ireland, most of whom remained all-Ireland bodies. Many bodies such as the IRFU, the Irish Hockey Union and the Irish Cricket Union (which became an all-Ireland body in 1923) operated on a federalised structure and were mindful to have equality in representation at council level from each province.¹¹ A full comparison on other sports during the period of

partition is the focus of Chapter Five. It is clear that this skewed intra-governance dynamic in favour of northern regions within Irish soccer, irrespective of factors external to the sport, became a major reason for division.

The one thing Leinster representatives could have done more of was attend the meetings of the committees of which they were members. The attendance record of Leinster delegates from 1910 to 1921 for IFA Council and sub-committee meetings was very poor, with the exception of the International committee where the Leinster representatives attended the bulk of the meetings (see Appendix B). It could be argued that the meetings were held in Belfast, making it considerably more difficult for people located elsewhere to attend and, given the make-up of each committee, Leinster representatives could be forgiven for feeling like token representatives with few opportunities available to effect any meaningful changes. With soccer administration at a relatively infant stage, most administrators had other jobs which did not allow them to travel to IFA meetings frequently. The paltry attendance record did not help Leinster's case, though, in attempting to gain more representation. There were two representatives from Leinster, J. Walsh and G.P. Fleming, on the Senior Clubs' Protest and Appeals committee in 1921 where the decision was made to grant Belfast the semi-final and final Irish Cup ties for 1921, compared to five from the North-East. From the outset, the committee was totally dominated by people from the North-East region (see Appendix A). It was just composed of representatives from the North-East in its first four years of existence from 1912 to 1916 and, thereafter, there was token representation from elsewhere with the bulk of membership still coming from the North-East. At that meeting on 13 January, Walsh was in attendance, Fleming not. Walsh argued for a Dublin semi-final. The committee defeated it by three votes to two.¹² Fleming's presence could have made a difference and Shelbourne may not have been forced to travel to Belfast to play Glenavon in one of the Irish Cup semi-final ties on 5 March. Fleming was also not present at the Protest and Appeals committee meeting of 7 March that decided by three votes to two that Shelbourne must return to Belfast for the replay.¹³ In fact, Fleming did not attend any meeting that season of all the committees he was a member of, including three IFA Council meetings, eight Emergency committee meetings, ten Protest and Appeals committee meetings, and one Rules Revision committee meeting (see Appendix B). It could be that Fleming and others within Leinster were in the process of separating from the IFA or it could have been seen as pointless in attending meetings dominated by Ulster

representatives. Based on Leinster's high attendance record on the International Selection committee bearing little fruit in achieving more Leinster representation on international teams, the latter seems plausible.

Appendix C lists all of the Irish international caps won from 1882 to 1921. The caps are broken down based on the location of each player's club at the time of each international. Overall, the IFA awarded 1,144 caps over that time period, the vast majority going to players who played for clubs based in Ulster (70 per cent). The IFA did not allow Irish players playing for overseas clubs to play for Ireland until 1899. Such players won 271 caps between 1899 and 1921. Players playing for Dublin clubs received 75 caps in total from 1882 to 1921, averaging at just two caps per year. Although soccer was more developed in Ulster at an earlier stage where professionalism was brought in sooner and there were more senior clubs in Ulster to choose from, the discrepancy between Ulster and Leinster representation was huge. Once Dublin clubs became more competitive and started to win Irish Cups and compete in the Irish Football League, their representation on the international team increased. It was not commensurate with their achievements, though. In 1908 the two Irish Cup finalists were Bohemians and Shelbourne. Five international caps were won between the two clubs that year, three the following year. The same clubs reached the final again in 1911, and again just five people from those clubs were called up for international duty. As mentioned in Chapter Three, after the First World War, just one cap was won by a player playing for a Dublin club before the split of 1921, compared to 23 caps for players playing for Ulster-based clubs in the same period.

Shelbourne, supported by the LFA, did not return to Belfast for the replay against Glenavon. The Protest and Appeals committee disqualified the club from the Irish Cup, following the rules as previously applied, granting the tie to Glenavon.¹⁴ In the subsequent months leading to the split in June, the grievances of Leinster were aired in newspapers and internally within the LFA and the IFA. Although the national political environment was a factor, it is clear internal issues were at the forefront of the Leinster's grievances, and internal issues led to Leinster seceding from the IFA. At a LFA council meeting in March, just seven days after the IFA Protest and Appeals committee meeting, the LFA members condemned the IFA for its 'unsportsmanlike action...we regard the decision to be against the best interests of the game'.¹⁵ It is clear from the swiftness of Leinster's response and the strong language used, that the Dublin-based body was looking for a showdown with the IFA,

whether to instigate secession or to use the threat of it as leverage to garner considerable concessions, it is not known. It is important to note that the Shelbourne-Glenavon incident was just a catalyst: the seeds for division had been sown for some time beforehand.

At the IFA council meeting of 22 March, the many objections that had built up over many years between Leinster and the IFA were brought up in a fractious meeting. Firstly, the IFA decision to host both Intermediate Cup semi-final ties in Belfast that season was questioned by the LFA. Leinster representative Larry Sheridan brought up his failed attempt to have the amateur international between England and Ireland played in Dublin that year. James MacBride from the North-West region responded that matches in Dublin 'did not pay for the dinner'. If the match was scheduled to be held in Dublin, the English team would not have travelled.¹⁶ Clearly, safety concerns were not the only factors affecting the IFA's decision to travel to Dublin, with finances also coming to the fore. Joseph Smurthwaite, first treasurer of the FAI, stated the IFA 'was too interested in financial matters'.¹⁷ The Leinster representatives brought up the issue of Shelbourne having to travel twice to Belfast to play Glenavon, with one LFA committee member calling it 'a scandal'.¹⁸ IFA council members retorted that it was too unsafe to travel to Dublin and reproduced a letter from a Dublin club not guaranteeing the safety of teams travelling from Belfast. The Leinster representatives responded by stating Belfast was also considered unsafe, yet Shelbourne still travelled to Belfast.¹⁹ This is an example of binary perceptions of the conflict being expressed by people from different location and identity backgrounds. Wilton, the IFA chairman, 'pointed out that the Committee who dealt with this matter had full Council powers and that no action could be taken in regard to what had been done', a clear abdication of the IFA council's responsibilities.²⁰ As discussed in Chapter Three, the 'Flag Incident' was also brought up by Leinster representatives, showing the national political atmosphere was a factor in driving a wedge between the IFA and Leinster. This very forthright meeting saw many of the deep-seated tensions come out in open display for the first time. Internal political issues, particularly around venue choices, were the dominant grievances amongst the Leinster delegation.

Once the IFA decided not to reverse the decision of the Protest and Appeals committee, the LFA set up an internal committee to draw up a report on whether the LFA should continue its connection with the IFA.²¹ The task of this sub-committee was to ascertain the wishes of the various clubs through the secretaries of the different leagues in

Leinster.²² The committee concluded on 4 May that the Leinster Association 'should start on its own' after the Leinster clubs' views were canvassed. The LFA Council endorsed the recommendations and 'then proposed that a Special General Meeting of the LFA be called for the purpose of disbanding the LFA and putting into operation a new Association next season'.²³ The fact that Leinster moved so quickly to cut its ties with the IFA suggests that secession had been planned for some time: it was just looking for the right catalyst. The Leinster FA chairman, R.E.T. Richey, a Methodist originally from Antrim, disagreed with the decision and resigned as chairman.²⁴ Richey had strong connections with Belfast, making it too difficult for him to sever connections with the IFA. In the weeks that followed, some others also disagreed with seceding from the IFA, including the chairman of the Leinster Junior Association, mainly on the grounds that it was better to look for concessions within the IFA than leaving the association altogether.²⁵ The circular sent to all of the clubs in Leinster was a very balanced one, highlighting reasons for leaving the IFA, and the likely pitfalls they would encounter if they did leave. The circular – which is worth quoting at length – just mentioned issues of an internal political nature. There was no mention of the national conflict:

Is it in the best interests of football that the association should continue its connection with the IFA Ltd?

This subject is purely for the clubs themselves.

The council wish to draw your attention to the following points should you decide not to affiliate.

(1) The other association would not immediately give recognition to a new one (2) your club would not be eligible to compete in the Irish Cup, Irish Intermediate Cup or Irish Junior Cup according to your status (3) your players would not be considered for International honours next season.

During the present season the principal rounds of the Irish Cup and Intermediate Cup were forbidden to be played in Dublin and the Irish Junior Cup was not played. In fact no matches with Northern clubs took place, thus the IFA cut themselves adrift from our association.

It is considered that if the association had a free hand a lot could be done to develop and popularise the game, rules being drawn up on lines suitable to clubs without any restrictions.²⁶

It is clear from the circular that the LFA knew difficulties lay ahead such as ostracization from IFA competitions and the exclusion of Leinster-based players from international selection. The vast majority within Leinster still felt they were better going it alone due to

perceived unfairness of decisions made by the IFA and the opportunity governing their own affairs would offer them. The LFA ratified the decision to leave the IFA on 1 June, at its annual general meeting. The LFA also decided at that meeting to establish a new association, the FAI.²⁷ Committee members supporting a rupture believed, due to clubs like Shelbourne and St. James' Gate being victimised by the IFA, that Leinster would be better off going it alone. Others commented on the imbalance of Leinster representation on the IFA sub-committees, with particular emphasis placed on the International Committee where Leinster representation was just one out of six. Another believed a new association embracing all of Ireland should be set up with the headquarters in Dublin.²⁸ The only person opposing the motion, Richey, acknowledged that Leinster had been treated unfairly by the IFA, but 'he failed to see what Leinster stood to gain by breaking away, unless it was the satisfaction of managing our own affairs. He preferred that the Leinster Association should become the premier Association, whilst remaining in'.²⁹ It is worth noting that as the meetings in the LFA to leave the IFA were taking place in May and June 1921, Northern Ireland as an entity came into being. Whilst political partition may have been an undercurrent, there is no evidence of anyone in Leinster specifically citing it as a reason to secede from the IFA at the time.

Whilst Leinster's positions within the IFA was being debated internally, it was also the cause of much speculation within newspapers, particularly after Shelbourne were required to travel back to Belfast for the Irish Cup semi-final replay against Glenavon. Echoing the sentiments of Leinster soccer administrators, most newspapers focused on internal factors and not the national political environment. *Sport* claimed 'the monstrous injustice of the IFA and their decision to make Shelbourne travel for the second time to Belfast...is enough to make the Dublin sports agitate for the immediate overthrow of the Dublin teams' connection with the autocratic bosses of the Irish football world'.³⁰ Another commentator in *Sport*, with the pen-name Viator, said it would be better to leave the IFA than be 'the useless tail of an inept and moribund organisation'.³¹ Belfast's nationalist-leaning newspaper the *Irish News* saw the incident as 'against all canons of sport, fair play, and justice'.³² The *Northern Whig and Belfast Post* echoed the sentiments of IFA members unwilling to travel to Dublin, stating that no northern player had 'any wild desire to play in Dublin under present circumstances'.³³ *Sport* also highlighted the resentment in Dublin on

Leinster players being ignored yet again for international duty in an upcoming match against Wales.³⁴

Sport was on a zealous mission against the IFA, blaming it for the crisis:

They have been in the habit of bouncing all their careers, and everybody took it lying down.

They thought they'd still walk over all and sundry. A Leinster secession will be bad for all of us, but we can afford to smile when the IFA are taught that autocracy won't always pay, that the worm turns sometimes.³⁵

Ireland's Saturday Night, the sporting supplement of the *Belfast Telegraph*, was supportive of the IFA, and like other newspapers focused on the internal political nature of the dispute, believing the 'decision of the Leinster Association to "cut the painter" with the IFA does not help the prospective' for the Irish Football League, believing the split would only dilute competition.³⁶ Whilst the war with the British in much of the south of Ireland was ongoing and the north-eastern six counties were preparing for partition, the soccer split at the time was seen by newspapers as primarily an internal matter that could be resolved regardless of the conflict in Ireland. It is interesting, though, that the newspapers, whilst citing internal political factors as the main reasons for the split, fall into expected political and identity camps. The Dublin-based newspapers and the *Irish News* were supportive of Leinster. Unionist newspapers like *Ireland's Saturday Night* and the *Northern Whig* supported the IFA. Even without overt evidence, this adds some weight to the national political nature of the soccer divide.

It is clear from the meetings and debates that took place in Leinster from March to June 1921 that the overwhelming reasons for their disagreements with the IFA were based on internal factors. There was no question that there was the undercurrent of the national political environment heightening tensions, but it was just that, an undercurrent. The evidence suggests the split would not have happened if Leinster was and perceived it was treated equally by the IFA. As discussed above, previous studies have overemphasised the importance of the national political environment and the partitioning of Ireland on causing the split in Irish soccer. They have taken a politics-centric approach and understated the lived experience of those on the ground within the Irish soccer community. Throughout the history of soccer governance in Ireland, particularly once the LFA grew to the extent of being able to

challenge the hegemony of the IFA, internal political matters were at the core of almost all disagreements. The issues raised in 1921 were not new. It is likely there would have been a split at another juncture, considering the rancour within the association. The experience of governing its own affairs since the First World War provided Leinster with the confidence by 1921 that it could do so again, totally independent of the IFA.

Whilst intra-governance issues were primarily responsible for causing the split, they also were the main reason for maintaining it. Many attempts were made from 1921 to 1932 to heal the division within Irish soccer either by conference or correspondence. The most striking element in the failure of those attempts was the internal political dynamic that permeated throughout. There was still hope in many quarters in Ulster that the split of 1921, like the one in 1912, was a temporary setback and could be resolved before the summer was over. The IFA issued an ultimatum to clubs in Leinster stating that unless notification of loyalty to the IFA was received before 21 July, clubs would be deemed no longer members and would be unable to play soccer against clubs from England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland.³⁷ Tynan argues that the IFA misunderstood and underestimated the LFA's discontent and 'would surely have done more to placate its southern affiliate if the seriousness of the situation that was developing in the south had been fully understood'.³⁸ The IFA changed tack when its efforts to retain clubs outside of Ulster met with almost no success and the FAI not only survived after its first year, but in many ways thrived. There was some internal dissent within the IFA for causing the split. Alexander Thompson, who served as IFA President from 1909 to 1912, complained:

That the ordering back of Shelbourne to replay their Irish Cup semi-final was a most unsporting decision...The Council neglected a fine opportunity before it developed, as someone should have been sent to Dublin. They should at once take steps to heal the breach.³⁹

He concluded by stating, 'The country was too small for two football associations. Senior football...was on a downward grade'.⁴⁰ Wilton replied by stating 'the association was prepared to heal it at any moment'.⁴¹ At the Irish Football League Annual Meeting, also held in May 1922, Tom Chambers, Chairman of Linfield, said, 'that he hoped the day was not far distant when they would again be competing against their Dublin friends in the League.

After all, they missed the Leinster clubs, and he believed that the Dublin men also missed them'.⁴² Wilton reiterated his call for a settlement between north and south in July 1922.⁴³ The IFA sent a letter to Dublin in December 1922, asking them 'if they would appoint a deputation from their association to meet a deputation from the Irish Football Association Ltd. to discuss ways and means for a settlement of the present football dispute in Ireland'.⁴⁴

The FAI, by December 1922, was more reluctant to engage with the IFA and to reach out with a view to obtaining a settlement. One major conciliatory gesture that was made by the FAI, though, was its choice of president to replace Richey who left his post just months after the formation of the FAI, unsurprising given his opposition to the breakaway in the first place. The FAI chose Sir Henry McLaughlin, a northerner who was well known and respected in IFA circles.⁴⁵ McLaughlin had played for Cliftonville and was knighted for his efforts to get people to join the armed forces during the First World War.⁴⁶ He was also involved in the campaign seeking clemency for the Irish Volunteer Kevin Barry, who was ultimately executed for his part in an ambush on British forces.⁴⁷ Choosing someone of McLaughlin's profile demonstrates the complexity and fluidity that existed with Irish identities.

The IFA and FAI met for the first time in the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin at the beginning of February 1923. The meeting was a frosty affair. The national political environment played a part in highlighting divisions, as did matters of an internal political nature. The IFA's terms of increased representation for the south (see below) were rejected. Some members of the FAI wanted 'dual control'. The 'Leinster FA were not prepared to play second fiddle to the IFA' again.⁴⁸ Although the conference ended acrimoniously, the IFA still hoped for unity. Wilton wrote a letter to the FAI, offering an olive branch, and showed how Ulster unionists sought a distinct separation of sport from political partition:

I am confident all is not lost. I feel that when the prevailing conditions cease to exist, as they must; and when the present feeling changes, as it will, a way will be found out of the impasse to an honourable settlement which will show our fellow-countrymen that, at least in the realm of sport, Irishmen can agree to settle their own differences. Such a consummation is, I am sure, earnestly wished for by all parties, and by none more so than yours sincerely.⁴⁹

As a gesture in showing his willingness to reach an agreement with the FAI, Wilton granted permission for Queen's University Belfast to play fixtures against Dublin University and University College Dublin even though the latter two were affiliated

to the FAI. He also granted 'Belfast Celtic FC permission to lend their ground to Alton United FC to play a match with Shelbourne United from Dublin in the New Football Association's Cup Competition'.⁵⁰ At the 1923 IFA annual meeting, one delegate commented that 'no effort should be spared to try and bring about re-union between North and South to establish the old-time friendship that formerly existed'.⁵¹ Wilton replied, to a loud applause, the wish 'that before their next annual meeting they would have a "United Ireland"' in soccer.⁵² Wilton, an Ulster Unionist activist, was here echoing the sentiments of many other unionists. His firmly held unionist political opinions co-existed with a softer cultural approach. This supports Miller's assertion of the identity complexities for the Ulster Protestant community at the time who 'had quasi-national feelings of attachment to Ireland, to "Ulster" and to a Britain which was less the real Great Britain than a vague concept of a Greater Britain which somehow the Empire might come to embody'.⁵³ By 1923, the prospects for the future of the game in the north was a lot healthier than the previous year with increases in finances and clubs.⁵⁴ The improvement in fortunes of the IFA allowed the body to revisit its tactics with the FAI, allowing it more security in its dealings.

The next conference between both associations was held at the IFA offices in Wellington Place, Belfast on 8 March 1924. It appeared the solution was amicable to both parties. The IFA proposed six main points:

- 1 The selection and control of International Matches to be vested in a Committee of equal representation from the Free State FA and the IFA, with the existing Chairman of the IFA as Chairman of the Committee.
- 2 The control of the Irish Senior Cup, to be dealt with by a Management Committee of equal representation from the Free State Association and the IFA.
- 3 The control of the Irish Junior Cup, to be dealt with by a Committee of Management consisting of equal representation from both bodies.
- 4 The Free State FA to deal entirely with their own internal affairs that is with offences by their clubs, and all matters which might best be described by the word internal.
- 5 Divisional Associations from the North and South, to have equal representation on the Council of the new body.
- 6 Meetings of the Council to be held alternately in the North and South.⁵⁵

A reporter from *Sport*, present at the meeting, commented that 'when the IFA delegates announced their offer it more or less took the breath away of the Free

State delegates', who were so pleased and surprised with the terms.⁵⁶ J.F. Harrison, chairman of the Football Association of the Irish Free State (FAIFS, the FAI's name change from 1923, discussed below), declared 'that the Southern delegates regarded the majority of the proposals as entirely satisfactory, and expressed appreciation of the sporting spirit in which they had been met'.⁵⁷ Confident of an agreement, the IFA Council unanimously ratified the proposed settlement. The FAIFS Council did not ratify it, however. Its primary objection was that the northern chairman would be the permanent chairman of the joint body on selecting the international team. It agreed to 'proceed with the discussions if granted alternate Chairmanship of that Committee'. The IFA replied it would not continue with the conference as an agreement had already been entered into between the IFA and Free State Council.⁵⁸ The discussions ended, and soccer was still split on its post-1921 lines.

The IFA could be forgiven for being disappointed at the FAIFS's decision. The parent body, established in 1880, the fourth oldest soccer association in the world, had conceded a great deal of control to the southern body, a body that was less than three years old. The IFA was essentially offering to share governance of soccer in Ireland, with the one caveat. The agreement that looked to all intents and purposes secured, broke down on that one point, an internal governance issue, the choice of chairman for the International Selection Committee. Considering the large emphasis that the southern body had always placed on the international team selection, it is not that surprising. The IFA may have believed, with some justification, that the offer made to the FAIFS in 1924 was a generous one. The FAIFS was in a very different situation, though, to the organisation it spawned from, the LFA. It was the governing body of a new political entity, not a divisional association of a parent body.

Lobbying by the FAIFS prompted the FA to suggest to the IFA that both Irish associations should agree to alternate chairmanship. The IFA Council agreed in December 1924 to concede to the FA, but was not 'prepared to make any further concessions'.⁵⁹ The one stumbling block from the conference in Belfast of March was now overcome. The IFA felt the FAIFS should now have no further objections. But the FAIFS had one more issue that de-railed the prospect of union again. It related to another internal matter, of financial entitlement for international matches played. The FAIFS offered two proposals, 'that the receipts of the games played in Ireland

should be either (1) retained by the Association within whose area the game is played, or (2) pooled'.⁶⁰ The IFA was not open to either proposal. It wished to retain the receipts from all the matches. Once again, the FAIFS introduced a new demand and again the IFA refused to relinquish some of its control.

No further conference was held until 1932. Both Irish associations still wanted a resolution to the impasse, though, ideally through union, a clear indication that neither body was partitionist. The IFA claimed in 1925 that it still 'hoped for a happy solution'.⁶¹ Writing a comprehensive article on the split in the newly published *Football Sports Weekly*, Robert Murphy, vice-chairman of the FAIFS, contended that finance was the most vital point to the dispute. He could not accept that the IFA should receive all of the money from proceeds in Northern Ireland and also the Irish Free State. He stated the FAIFS in seeking its share of the profits, did so, 'not from need of the money, but with the object of securing its due share of recognition'. Advocating union, he believed without it, the quality of football in the Irish Free State was falling behind that of its competitors, a natural consequence of limitation of competition.⁶² The Irish Football League agreed to meet a team from the Free State in March 1926.⁶³ The first match, held in Dublin, was attended by James Wilton and many other officials from the IFA. At a dinner in Jury's Hotel following the match, the FAIFS president McLaughlin, expressed the hope, 'That that day they had joined a link which, he trusted, would never be broken again' and 'that the match would do something extraordinary for Irish football'.⁶⁴ The match led to some commentators proposing an All-Ireland League of clubs from north and south, with teams participating from the principal cities of Belfast, Cork and Dublin.⁶⁵ The Inter-League fixtures continued annually until 1931. They were halted by a dispute between the FAIFS and the IFA over three players from Bohemians who declared themselves eligible for an amateur international in November 1930 between an IFA-selected Irish team and England. This resulted in the FAIFS suspending the players indefinitely.⁶⁶ The annual inter-league match between the two leagues was cancelled by the FAIFS due to the IFA not recognising the FAIFS suspensions of the three Bohemians players.⁶⁷

Pressure from the FA led to another conference in 1932 between the two Irish associations, a conference that turned out to be the last meaningful attempt for

decades by both bodies to re-unify. At the first day of the conference held in Dublin, it was agreed by both delegations, 'That a joint committee be formed of equal representation from the IFA and the Free State FA with alternate chairmen, to control international matches, the profits and losses to be equally divided between the two Associations each year'.⁶⁸ Although some IFA delegates believed it would be difficult to convince many on the IFA Council to sharing funds from the lucrative British fixtures versus the continental ones of the Free State, both sides eventually agreed on shared finances.⁶⁹ With the obstacle of profit sharing finally agreed upon, it looked as if a settlement was likely. The IFA readied itself once again to sign an agreement to be inserted in its rule book with Wilton commenting that 'he considered it a matter for gratification that the resolution had been passed'.⁷⁰

The second day of the conference was held in Belfast and what was hoped by the IFA to be a rubber-stamping affair turned out quite differently. The FAIFS asked for equal representation on the International Board, taking one of the IFA's two seats. This was the first occasion this had been requested by the FAIFS. The IFA flatly refused the request, instead asking why the matter was not brought up in Dublin? The FAIFS responded by saying there was no need to bring it up as 'the international agreement was to be on a fifty-fifty basis, that basis was to hold good in everything appertaining to international football'.⁷¹ The *Irish Times* believed the IFA would not cede one of its seats on the International Board as it wished to retain 'its position as the principal ruling body, with the FAIFS occupying a secondary place in Irish football'.⁷² The debate ended acrimoniously. The FAIFS secretary, Jack Ryder, justified the FAIFS stance by stating that anywhere where the name 'Ireland' was being used, the FAIFS must have representation. He was hopeful that negotiations could be resumed 'in order that the friction which has retarded the game's full development in Ireland may be removed'.⁷³ The IFA decided there was no further point in continuing the discussions. For a conference that had promised so much at the halfway stage, it was a bitter blow for many to see it end so acrimoniously the next day. Although national political issues arose during the second day of the conference, it broke down yet again on an internal governance issue. It is important to note that there was no evidence of the divisive issues of flags, anthems and other emblems, key symbols of national identity, being mentioned in meetings and

correspondence between the IFA and the FAI/FAIFS. Undoubtedly, if those issues had come to the fore, they could have de-railed unity, if other issues were resolved. Both associations went on their separate paths, there were no more conferences on a settlement for many years to come. The 1932 one was the closest they ever came to union.

There is no doubt that the national political environment and geographic dimensions contributed to division within Irish soccer, as has been argued throughout. Regardless of the impact of those factors, front and centre in grievances and disagreements were issues of an internal political nature. They were the main issues that caused the split and the main ones that sustained it. The example of soccer, even though it mirrored the political partition of Ireland, shows that 'the outlines of the political state were rarely, if ever, coterminous with the lived experience of borderland communities'.⁷⁴ Soccer administrators in Ireland viewed their division as an internal matter, quite separate from the political partition. Sahlin's view that the states of France and Spain did not impose the boundary on local society in Cerdanya, rather 'the Cerdans sought to manipulate the boundary in pursuit of local interests', is relevant in the Irish soccer community's case also.⁷⁵ The political partition of Ireland may have exacerbated tensions in soccer but it was not the primary reason for the split. The split was primarily caused and nurtured by, to coin Sahlin's phrase, 'the pursuit of local interests' by the LFA/FAI and the IFA.

The National Political Environment

In Malcolm Brodie's, *100 Years of Irish Football*, officially sanctioned by the IFA in 1980, the IFA claimed that it 'functioned harmoniously until a political movement caused re-adjustment of relations between Ireland and the British Government'. It states that the split came about when the Free State was formed.⁷⁶ Aside from erroneously claiming relations were harmonious before 1921, the split occurred before the Irish Free State was formed.⁷⁷ Sugden and Bairner also made this assertion in 1993 when they claimed that the creation of the Irish Free State prompted the LFA to secede from the IFA.⁷⁸ Historians have also claimed that soccer unity in Ireland became a 'a victim of political tensions'.⁷⁹ Mike Cronin in *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity* asserted that 'Ireland's politics in the twentieth century divided soccer along the lines of partition'. The soccer

authorities in Dublin had formalised partition and independence.⁸⁰ Garnham claims that ‘the immediate reasons for the division of Irish football in effect seem to have lain in civil disorder that had occurred in the country, and then its eventual political realignment’. There is enough evidence to suggest that political partition was a major contributor to football partition.⁸¹ He qualifies this by stating that neither the IFA nor the FAI were partitionist in outlook, though, as both sought to govern football for the whole island of Ireland.⁸² More recently Mark Tynan has argued, ‘recent political developments, in the guise of the Government of Ireland Act of December 1920, provided the Leinster association with the legislative legitimacy to’ sever links with the IFA.⁸³ In order to fully understand the importance of the national political environment in causing the split in Irish soccer, it is important to reflect on the timeline of the partitioning of Ireland outlined in Chapter One, and how this coincided with the Irish soccer split.

The catalyst that led to the Irish soccer split, Shelbourne being ordered to return to Belfast for a replay of the Irish Cup semi-final tie with Glenavon, occurred in March 1921.⁸⁴ The LFA seceded from the IFA three months later, on 1 June.⁸⁵ The FAI came into being in June 1921, officially ratified on 2 September by members mainly from the LFA.⁸⁶ The Government of Ireland Act 1920 came into effect on 3 May 1921 and the Northern Ireland parliament officially opened in June 1921.⁸⁷ The Government of Ireland Act 1920, ‘so crucial for the north, had no impact whatever on the rest of the country’.⁸⁸ The war between British forces and Sinn Féin ended with a truce in July 1921 followed by the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, which led to the formation of the Irish Free State the following year.⁸⁹ By the end of 1921, most people believed the border was not permanent and would either shrink or go altogether. Although there is some crossover in timelines between the partitioning of Ireland and the split in Irish soccer, it is a very simplistic understanding of the acceptance and implementation of partition to believe that the overriding reason for the soccer split was the partitioning of Ireland. The split happened as the fledgling northern jurisdiction came into being, an entity not recognised by a third of its population and by almost all in the 26 counties. The long running home rule question, unionist intransigence and the effects of the Irish revolution, had by the close of 1921, combined to create two political entities within one island. However, soccer was not beholden to national politics. While soccer’s partition in some ways mirrored that of politics, its causes were often quite separate. It needs to be reiterated that social and cultural partition did not follow the

political and legal partition of Ireland. There is also merit in Tynan's contention that 'the LFA had become disillusioned with IFA governance long before' the conflict in Ireland and that 'it is almost certain that a similar conflict between the LFA and the IFA would have eventually come to pass, given the continuance of the latter's perceived transgressions'.⁹⁰

There is no evidence of partition being mentioned at the time by either the IFA or the LFA as a reason to sever links in 1921. It still would be remarkable if it was not a considerable undercurrent whilst the sport was being divided. Although many senior figures of the IFA were unionist in political outlook, no one within the IFA wanted Leinster excluded from the IFA. The IFA saw itself throughout the immediate crisis caused by Leinster's secession and for decades after as the sole and primary governing body for soccer for the whole island of Ireland. Soccer administrators in Dublin were keenly aware of the opposition from many quarters in the south of the perception of it being supportive of an imperialist body headquartered in Belfast, and there is no doubt this was a factor in causing divisions (as explored in Chapter Three). Leinster soccer administrators too, like the IFA, were not partitionists. The newly formed FAI sought to govern football for the whole of the island too. As both the IFA and FAI considered themselves to be all-Ireland bodies, this is clear evidence of not mirroring the political partition of the island. The Leinster administrators' primary grievances were of an internal political nature spanning decades. Those grievances were amplified by the ongoing tensions caused by the conflicts in Ireland. The partition of Ireland was not a straightforward severance of the north from the south. On top of the confusion it caused, many people and organisations, including sporting bodies, found it easier to remain united, as they had for years, after partition. The experiences of social and cultural bodies were markedly different from the 'sour economic and political relations' that Etain Tannam claims existed between north and south after partition. Politically, unionists believed 'cross-border cooperation was an Irish strategy to achieve unity through the back-door' whilst Irish Free State 'policy towards Northern Ireland, both politically and economically, was isolationist'.⁹¹ This contrast will be further explored in Chapters Five and Six.

Soccer, arguably more than all other sports, was not immune from the turmoil Ireland experienced during the period that saw two divergent jurisdictions. The IFA acknowledged this at its Annual Meeting in Belfast in May 1922.⁹² The IFA and FAI brought up the political situation on a number of occasions during the following decade as an

obstacle to union. At the first conference between both bodies after the split in February 1923, in an attempt to heal the division, one of the main points discussed was governance from Belfast. One of the FAI delegates claimed the biggest obstacle to a settlement in his eyes was that the FAI:

Would never agree to the entire control of football being run from Belfast, as they might as well give up altogether. He would suggest dual control...We might as well be plain and straight in this business, and I wish to state that unless the headquarters be in Dublin, if there is one controlling body, we could not hold the clubs in the South we have got since leaving the IFA. They would go over at once to another game [the GAA].⁹³

Another FAI delegate, Larry Sheridan commented:

We can't get past the sentimental point of the office being in Dublin. There is a strong political bias in this matter, and if we send representatives up to Belfast, Munster would go out from under us, as the political feeling was such at the moment that they would not agree to be governed from Belfast.⁹⁴

The 'strong political bias' Sheridan referred to was the ongoing boycott of Belfast organisations and goods by the south caused by the Belfast violence of 1920 to 1922 (see p. 40). Many people in the south looked upon most bodies associated with Belfast, such as the IFA, with deep trepidation. It is little wonder the delegates from the FAI objected to being governed from Belfast, knowing it would lose many from its fold if it did.

At the same conference, Wilton, the IFA chairman offered the FAI 'more representation on the [IFA] Council...Dublin should have a fair share of international matches' and 'Council meetings should be held alternately in Belfast and Dublin'.⁹⁵ The FAI decisively rejected the proposal and wanted:

The present Irish Football Association to become the North of Ireland Football Association, or some similarly named body...The relations between the Football Association of Ireland and the North of Ireland Football Association to be, except as hereinafter provided, similar to the relations existing between The Football Association of England and the Army Football Association...The North of Ireland Football Association to have the right to nominate members on all international selection committees on a scale to be arranged.⁹⁶

In essence, the FAI was demanding to become the main governing body for soccer in Ireland, further evidence it was not partitionist, with the IFA being relegated to a divisional association similar to the Army Football Association's relationship with the FA in England. The FAI also requested, for the first time, that the IFA change its name to reflect the

territory it had control of, Northern Ireland. Naturally, the IFA did not agree to the terms and the conference ended acrimoniously.

Whilst the overall political climate did not feature as a factor in the two conferences held between the IFA and FAIFS in 1924, there was a reference to it in the last meaningful conference in 1932. In a heated exchange, caused by the Dublin association asking for one of the IFA's seats on the International Board, Wilton replied 'You never put yourself in the position to be on any International Board. Shall I tell you why? Because you insisted on being either a Dominion or a Republic'.⁹⁷ The FAIFS accused him of bringing politics into the conference for which he apologised.⁹⁸ An outburst followed from one of the Dublin delegates, Robert (Bob) Murphy:

That is a political matter...We have not yet unfortunately, altogether a Republic of Ireland to help us...You do not know what Republic means. When we have a Republic in Ireland it will be a Republic, and you people of the Six Counties will not be allowed to use the name of Ireland, the name of the thirty-two. We tried to get a settlement, to get half of everything and we would give you people half of everything. We believe now there is some reason why you would not give us half representation on the International Board. The only reason you have given is because we choose, or tried to be either a Dominion or a Republic. I think that is a ridiculous thing to say.⁹⁹

This tense exchange, over ten years after the split, showed how raw the political environment still was and the significant political and identity differences amongst soccer administrators in Ireland. Despite attempts at unity, the argument demonstrates the 'otherness' of the north to the south. This sharp altercation was somewhat of an anomaly, though, in interactions between both bodies from 1921 to 1932, where most disagreements revolved around internal political matters. Whilst the national political division on occasion was given voice, it was peripheral to the main arguments between the two associations which centred around sporting administration issues.

The national political question was used extensively by the FAI to gain full international recognition, a long battle that spanned decades. Gaining international recognition and the right to play international matches was essential for the FAI's survival. According to Cronin, Irish soccer could not exist in glorious isolation. International recognition also 'gave soccer the ability to represent a physical manifestation of the nation'.¹⁰⁰ In its first season 1921-22, the FAI was more successful than expected with a 33 per cent increase in membership of Leinster clubs and a steady if not spectacular rise in

clubs in Munster.¹⁰¹ However, it was not recognised by any other association. This led to some clubs under its remit to consider re-affiliating with the IFA. During the summer of 1923, persistent rumours appeared in newspapers that there was discontent in the FAI camp, that the senior teams Bohemians and Shelbourne were unhappy and were looking to re-affiliate to the IFA.¹⁰² The rumours were well founded. A number of FAI-affiliated clubs such as Wasps FC, Linton FC and Freebooters approached the IFA that summer, looking to regain membership to the northern body. Some people in Dublin left the FAI and formed a new football association. One of its representatives was Harry Wigoder who had been one of the main people responsible for forming the FAI. Wigoder, as well as other delegates from the new body, travelled to Belfast to meet the IFA in June 1923.¹⁰³ Bohemians sent a deputation to Belfast to meet the IFA and the Irish Football League with the purpose 'of Bohemians once more returning to the Association'.¹⁰⁴ There were reports in newspapers that Shelbourne were also seeking to re-join the IFA.¹⁰⁵ The primary reason for clubs in Leinster seeking to settle their differences with the IFA was the issue of international recognition. Once the conference between the FAI and the IFA failed in February 1923, many in the south believed the prospect of international competition had evaporated, as summed up by *Ireland's Saturday Night* who compared the future of the game for both north and south:

Surely the time has now arrived when those with an interest in football south of the Boyne will realise that they have no chance of securing International recognition, and that their best plan for the sake of the game in Dublin and district, is to sink all their differences with the parent body, and get on with the sport...We in the North admit the standard of play would be improved locally by Southern opposition, but where we are better off is that variety is added to our programme by English, Scottish and Welsh visits.¹⁰⁶

In the early summer of 1923, the IFA believed it was only a matter of time before the FAI folded and soccer in Ireland would be re-united due to the prospect of clubs seceding from the FAI. By July, however, most of the Dublin clubs looking to re-affiliate were wavering. At an Emergency Committee meeting in early July, Bohemians notified the IFA it had adjourned its 'decision re again affiliating with the IFA for a few weeks'. The new association in Dublin stated 'that they would not be able to make proper headway until the end of August'.¹⁰⁷ Shelbourne followed by stating it was entering a team to the FAI league the following season.¹⁰⁸ In a letter to the IFA, the new association explained its reasons for its change of heart 'in the

event of the Free State FA being recognised by the Football Association they would be compelled to dissolve their Association'.¹⁰⁹ The FAI's campaign to gain international recognition was finally beginning to bear fruit and the fact that Ireland was now partitioned was a key factor in it gaining admission to FIFA.

When the FAI was formed, it sent letters to football associations all over the world informing them of its birth.¹¹⁰ The FAI's first key overtures were to the associations of England, Scotland and Wales. Supporting the IFA, as had been the case for many years before, the FAI found little joy with those associations.¹¹¹ Rebuffed by the British associations, the FAI's best opportunity for recognition lay with the international governing body, FIFA. In its first application for membership to FIFA on St. Patrick's Day 1922, the FAI claimed it was applying for membership on the grounds that it was the only governing body of all clubs in the Irish Free State as well as 32 clubs in Northern Ireland. It stated its affiliated divisional associations included the Leinster Football Association, the Belfast and District Association, the Athlone and District Football Association and the Munster Football Association.¹¹² Most of the 32 clubs from Northern Ireland were the 23 clubs from the nationalist Falls and District League in Belfast, including Alton United, a team that comprised of many players from Belfast Celtic, still absent from soccer.¹¹³ The letter concluded by claiming:

It should, therefore, be manifest that all International football relations between the Irish Free State and other countries can only be governed on the part of Ireland by the Football Association of Ireland.

The Football Association of Ireland assumed control of the game in Ireland outside of the greater part of the Belfast and the County Antrim areas last year with the object of giving Ireland a full free and unfettered opportunity of asserting herself in the International Football tourneys of the world. Ireland never had that opportunity, as the country declined to co-operate with the Irish Football Association, Ltd...The FAI maintain, and it cannot with truth be denied, that, so long as they have inalienable and undivided support of all the clubs and Divisional Associations of the Irish Free State, they are equally entitled with all other Associations to all the rights, privileges and prerogatives enjoyed by them.¹¹⁴

At this stage, manifested by accepting applications from clubs based in Northern Ireland, the FAI sought control of soccer for the whole island. The *Irish Times* called the FAI the All-Ireland Football Association in September 1921.¹¹⁵ The FAI emblem

had a logo of the four Irish provinces on it in 1922.¹¹⁶ FAI committee member Bob Murphy confirmed this in a letter he sent to the Irish Free State Department of External Affairs, seeking help, in June 1923:

The FAI was established in 1921, before the Truce, at a time when we did not foresee the political developments which brought about the Irish Free State. The Association, as its name implied, was intended to govern football throughout the entire country and it obtained, and, until recently retained, membership not only in the Free State area but also in Belfast and Derry.¹¹⁷

Murphy's comments are instructive by showing that the Government of Ireland Act 1920 was not seen as pivotal by the FAI in creating two political entities in Ireland. Lynch's assertion that there still were a 'huge number of contradictory and divisive expectations of what Ireland would become' and 'the final nature of the settlement was anybody's guess', holds true here.¹¹⁸ The truce between Sinn Féin and the British government, followed by the Anglo-Irish Treaty which led to the formation of the Irish Free State, was seen as the decisive political event by the FAI. Murphy also stated some years later that the 'political division of the country has not tended to make the inhabitants of the respective areas more reliant on each other's good faith and a rapprochement, while probably certain, will not be speedy'.¹¹⁹

The FAI was initially thwarted in its effort to gain entry to FIFA. The international governing body was unclear of the Irish Free State's status as a national entity and was reluctant to do anything that might upset the FA (who supported the IFA), even though the FA was no longer a member of FIFA due to the admission of the defeated Central Power nations from the First World War back into FIFA.¹²⁰ It, like most other football associations, tended to lionise the FA, seen as not only the first association but also the primary authority in global soccer. The FA and its committee members were regularly in receipt of gifts and titles bestowed upon them by associations around the world for 'numerous services rendered' by the 'great Federation' to the game of soccer around the globe.¹²¹ A leading soccer official in France, Achilles Duchenne, claimed in 1923 that the entire board of the French Football Federation (FFF) was 'at the English entire devotion...1 fact which I personally lament'.¹²² Denning has shown that such patrimony existed in world skiing

too where Norway's 'traditional' ethos took precedence over 'modern' Alpine skiing for decades.¹²³

Duchenne and the FFF were instrumental in paving the way for the FAI to gain membership within FIFA. FIFA, in conjunction with the FFF, granted permission to the Parisian club, Gallia, to visit Dublin and play clubs affiliated to the FAI 'in recognition of the fact that the Irish Federation is seeking affiliation'.¹²⁴ Gallia played Bohemians and Pioneers on 31 March and 1 April 1923 in front of representatives from the Irish and French governments. Importantly, it was the first real example internationally, of the FAI's right to exist. The FAI visited Duchenne and the secretary of the FFF, Henri Delaunay, in April 1923 to seek guidance on the best line of policy to pursue at the FIFA Annual Congress due to be held in Geneva the following month.¹²⁵ Duchenne and Delaunay made it:

Quite clear that while France could not understand the existence of two Associations claiming to govern football in the same area, she could having regard to the National position, thoroughly support two Associations in Ireland, one governing exclusively in the Irish Free State and the other in Northern Ireland.¹²⁶

Duchenne in particular was very helpful to the FAI, advising the association to claim:

The application for membership by the FAI does not mean to affect in anyway the actual membership of the IFA, this Body governing all clubs situated inside the Ulster province, a fact...which I believe will help to show that you do not intend to bring the International Federation into a quarrel but simply want recognition equal to that given to a less powerful body.¹²⁷

The FAI sought and received the support of the Irish Free State government. The new government found it difficult to gain acceptance internationally, thus 'self-definition in areas such as sport became hugely important'.¹²⁸ In a letter to FIFA, Osmonde Grattan Esmonde, on behalf of the Minister for External Affairs, stated that the FAI was 'entitled to all the rights and privileges appertaining to and enjoyed by each and every separate National Association, in accordance with Rule 1, of the Articles of the Federation Internationale De Football Association'.¹²⁹ A diplomat and TD, Grattan Esmonde later became president of the FAI and the LFA.¹³⁰

In the FAI's application to FIFA in 1923, it claimed to be the only body governing soccer in the Irish Free State, covering an area of 27,128 square miles compared to the 5,456 square miles of Northern Ireland. The final territory of

Northern Ireland was undecided at this stage as the Boundary Commission had not yet convened. The FAI asserted that the Irish Free State possessed the same national status as Canada and South Africa, both members of FIFA, and was not governed in any respect by the British Parliament at Westminster, unlike Northern Ireland. The FAI also stated it controlled more clubs than had ever been governed in the whole of Ireland, 'the very existence of the game in the Irish Free State is, in the opinion of my Council, dependent on the maintenance of the Football Association of Ireland, since that body alone can satisfy the national aspirations of the clubs'.¹³¹

The FIFA Annual Congress held in Geneva in 1923 was the first in nine years, the First World War and its aftermath putting paid to a congress before then. New members to FIFA could only be admitted at Annual Congresses. As this was the first congress in nine years, there were many applications. Nine countries were granted membership of FIFA, including Brazil, Portugal, Poland and Yugoslavia.¹³² The most contentious decision related to Ireland. Frederick Wall, secretary of the English FA, supporting the IFA, in a letter read out at the FIFA Congress, stated the FA believed the FAI should not be considered for membership as the dispute between the FAI and the IFA was a domestic matter, the English FA would continue to recognise the IFA and would not allow its clubs to play against those of the Dublin body, and a serious situation would arise between the FA and FIFA if the FAI was granted membership.¹³³ Bob Murphy, who was an FAI delegate at the congress, stated that the FA letter 'was the death knell of our hopes of immediate admission to the Federation'.¹³⁴ He also explained 'that there were not two bodies working in the same area, that the F. A. of Ireland was the only Association in the Free State of Ireland to govern football and recognised as such by the Government of the Free State, which is politically independent and standing in the same relation to Great Britain as Canada and South Africa'.¹³⁵ Murphy also stated that the FAI did not wish to interfere with the jurisdiction of the IFA, 'which is operative only outside the Irish Free State'. He also claimed 'that there are at present two nationalities in Ireland, the areas of these nationalities were overlapping each other at first, but not at the present time'.¹³⁶ He was supported by another FAI delegate at the meeting, J.F. Harrison, who declared, 'the Free State of Ireland as a separate country was entitled to govern its own sports'.¹³⁷ Many of the delegates from other countries asked

questions about the Irish Free State's political status, its relations with Westminster and the nature of the boundary between the six counties of Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland. After a debate, FIFA agreed that the FAI would be granted membership if it restricted its membership to clubs in the twenty-six counties.¹³⁸ The FAI immediately took on board the recommendations made at the FIFA Annual Congress. Firstly, it changed its name from the Football Association of Ireland to the Football Association of the Irish Free State (FAIFS). Secondly, it decided to allow only clubs based in the Irish Free State to be members of its association. Clubs from the Falls and District League as well as all other clubs in Northern Ireland had their membership cancelled.¹³⁹ The FAIFS contacted FIFA in July enquiring about its status. The FIFA general secretary, Cornelius August Wilhelm Hirschman, responded saying that a letter had been sent by the IFA to FIFA stating it:

Recognises the national status of the Irish Free State and defends the view that it does not necessarily follow that Football in Ireland should be divided into two separate organisations, as it would injure existing competitions, hitherto open to all clubs in Ireland; National Cup, Irish Football League, and International Matches.¹⁴⁰

Ryder, the FAIFS secretary, replied:

Since the signing of the Treaty between Ireland and England on the 6th December, 1921, no Free State club has competed in the so-called Irish League or Irish Cup despite the hardship inflicted on the clubs and players of the Free State in being denied recognition by other National Associations...I am, however, to point out that the latter Association's expressed desire to acquire membership within the Irish Free State is in direct contravention of the principle...the Federation would neither allow the Free State Association to hold membership within the area controlled by the Belfast Parliament nor permit the IFA, Ltd., to interfere in the football affairs of the Irish Free State.¹⁴¹

FIFA granted the FAIFS provisional membership status on 10 August, becoming a full member in May 1924.¹⁴² The FAI realigned and rebranded itself domestically in order to gain international recognition. The soccer administrators of the Free State were not partitionists, they never wanted to govern for just the Free State. They felt, after being snubbed by the home associations, that their only way of gaining international recognition and surviving was by being partitionist and recognising the new political status in Ireland as a means to achieve their goals, a means of pursuing 'local interests'. It was merely a tactical ploy. This is an instance of what Leary refers to as the 'common sense' of everyday life prevailing over political ideologies.¹⁴³ The episode shows that the national political environment was a

factor, though, in maintaining the division. Were Ireland not partitioned, it is unlikely that the FAI would have gained FIFA membership, making it more difficult to survive on its own without that all-important international recognition.

The political partition of Ireland was later used by the FAIFS to end the partition of soccer in Ireland. It protested against the use of the name 'Ireland' by IFA international teams and the selection by the IFA of players born in the Free State.¹⁴⁴ It succeeded in getting FIFA to support its motion to change the name of the Irish Football Association to the Northern Ireland Football Association in 1927 and 1929.¹⁴⁵ The 1927 FIFA Annual Congress unanimously adopted the resolution, including the English and Scottish delegates present.¹⁴⁶ Despite agreeing to the FAIFS motion, England and Scotland still recognised Northern Ireland as 'Ireland' and refused to play an international team from the Free State. The FAIFS, in a memorandum to the Free State government, highlighted the implications the abuse of the name Ireland was having, 'We submit that in recognising Northern Ireland in sport as "Ireland", and in excluding from the benefits accruing from the use of the name "Ireland", the FAIFS, the British Associations are committing an unwarrantable aggression on the rights of the citizens of the Saorstat (Irish Free State)'.¹⁴⁷ The FAIFS derided the IFA for playing 'God Save the King' and flying the Union Jack at an 'Irish' international fixture against France, an example of how issues relating to symbolism could potentially fuel division.¹⁴⁸ It questioned the anomaly of the governing bodies in Great Britain recognising the Northern Ireland athletics body (see p. 155) and yet in soccer the British bodies recognised the Northern Irish body, the IFA, as the soccer body for all of Ireland.¹⁴⁹ With the Northern Ireland body being accepted as the primary Irish association by the home associations, 'it appeared to the world that the twenty-six counties had seceded from Ireland instead of the actuality of the six counties doing so under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920'.¹⁵⁰ The FAIFS assured the Free State government:

We wish to re-affirm our willingness to share the internationals with the Association in Northern Ireland...that Ireland's home games should be played alternately in Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State; (2) That the gate receipts accruing from international matches in either area should be appropriated by the Association controlling in that area; and (3) that the expenses of Ireland's international matches in Great Britain should be jointly defrayed.¹⁵¹

The pressure exerted on the IFA relating to the name "Ireland" was a means to sway it to agree to a unified team, primarily. This was admitted by Murphy in 1925, saying 'There will

either be a settlement by force [the threat to suspend international games] or an agreed settlement which would really make for harmonious working. All whose aims are to place Ireland first and sectional interests after will hope for that agreement'.¹⁵² This is evidence of the flexible ways the FAIFS used the political status of Ireland to pursue its own ends, what Sahlins refers to as manipulating boundaries 'in pursuit of local interest'.¹⁵³

The IFA did not believe that soccer should follow the same path as the island was politically, by being partitioned. It steadfastly stuck to its stance of being an all-Ireland body and selecting an all-Ireland team. This argument was put forward by an IFA delegate (McBride) at an International Board meeting in 1931:

that the political division in Ireland did not alter the position of the Irish FA as representing Ireland on the International Board, and at International Conferences, and in matches. North and South Wales, North and South England, might be politically separated, but the Welsh FA and The Football Association would still represent Wales and England internationally. What happened in Ireland might happen to any country, and if the old-established Associations were pushed out it would be disastrous to the game.¹⁵⁴

The Scottish FA supported this stance. Its president R. Campbell stated:

No other sporting body has recognised the political position. Why should we in football?... We cannot have two Associations in Ireland. We have always had the Irish Football Association as the body with International status. They were perfectly right in selecting, in our opinion, any man born in the Free State, which is Ireland just as much as Northern Ireland, in sport, though not in a political sense.¹⁵⁵

This is an example of the 'ambiguity, fluidity, and uncertainty' surrounding borders and how they could represent different interpretations from the political to the cultural.¹⁵⁶

The political partition of Ireland had an impact on the division in soccer. It led to tensions and was used as a ploy, particularly by the FAI/FAIFS, to achieve particular goals. Those goals were almost always in pursuit of, what Sahlins terms, as 'local interests'. The national political status was a tactical instrument mainly, with both associations optimally wishing for unity in Irish soccer. In the decade after partition, the IFA stated on a number of occasions that, whilst recognising political partition, 'it does not necessarily follow that Football in Ireland should be divided into two separate organisations'.¹⁵⁷ This is clear evidence that organisations outside of the political sphere, including ones like soccer that were partitioned, were free to react to the political partition of Ireland in whatever way they felt was best for their members. The two political entities in Ireland did 'not simply

impose their values and boundaries on local society'.¹⁵⁸ The reactions of the soccer community to partition reveals that the Irish border, like all global borderlands, was 'porous, open and contested'.¹⁵⁹ The evidence suggest that both associations would have overcome their differences on issues relating to national politics and identity. It was, in reality, intra-governance factors that engineered to keep them apart.

Geography

Mirroring the wider political divide, central to the soccer dispute was the geography of Ireland. This was essentially a clash between Dublin and Belfast, the two centres of soccer in Ireland. Issues that were at the core of the dispute, all with strong intra-governance dimensions, revolved around venues for matches; the location international players were selected from; the representation afforded to each province on the IFA council and its sub-committees; and the political environment of each city. Even before the partition of Ireland, historians have argued that there was a real feeling that Dublin and Belfast already belonged to two different jurisdictions.¹⁶⁰ Whilst this understates the ambiguities and complexities of Irish identities, there still were marked differences between both cities. During the violence from 1920-1923, many in the IFA genuinely believed Dublin was a haven for lawlessness. The unionist newspapers they read only reinforced this impression.¹⁶¹ Regardless of a curfew being imposed in Belfast and an IFA council member being seriously wounded by the violence that engulfed Belfast between 1920 and 1922, it took a Leinster representative in March 1921 to point out to IFA council members that Belfast was considered as unsafe as Dublin at the time.¹⁶² In Dublin, the IFA was not considered as a governing body for all of Ireland. It was continuously referred to as the 'Belfast Association'.¹⁶³ The perception of the IFA being a 'Belfast Association' was brought up by Richey, the Leinster FA chairman, at the IFA council meeting of 22 March 1921, stating:

He did not think that the IFA members of council were in touch with Leinster. The sooner the IFA declared they wanted the Association confined to Ulster the better, and let them in Leinster know where they stood. It looked as if they were going to kill football outside of Belfast.¹⁶⁴

The disenchantment felt by Leinster and other peripheral divisional associations such as Munster and Fermanagh and Western towards the Belfast-centricity of the IFA cannot be overestimated. The venues for international and Irish Cup matches, the venues for IFA

council and sub-committee meetings, and the provincial make-up of those committees showed a body that had a clear bias towards Belfast. It did not act as an all-Ireland governing body.

Once soccer was split in 1921, geographic considerations were foremost in much of the FAI's thinking after its foundation. It sought not to make the same mistakes the IFA had in governing its different regions. The administrative make-up of the FAI, when it was established in the summer of 1921, was to all intents and purposes the administrative make-up of the LFA. At the FAI ratification meeting of 2 September all of the LFA committee resigned and immediately 'offered themselves for re-election under the auspices of the Football Association of Ireland'.¹⁶⁵ All of the clubs in the first season of the Football League of Ireland, established by the FAI, were from Dublin.¹⁶⁶ This in many ways mirrored the early years of the IFA as an exclusively north-east-based body. From the outset, though, the FAI was eager to present itself as an all-Ireland body that catered for as many regions on the island as possible. In its application to FIFA in March 1922, as detailed above, it listed its divisional associations as the LFA, the Belfast and District Association, the Athlone and District Football Association and the MFA.¹⁶⁷ It claimed that the IFA just governed for Belfast and surrounding areas in County Antrim. The IFA was eager to remain an all-Ireland body, at least on paper. It did little to encourage the growth of the sport in regions such as Munster and Connaught, though (See Chapter Two). It saw the secession as an issue with Leinster and no other region. Even though all clubs outside of Northern Ireland affiliated to the FAI, at the 1922 IFA Annual Meeting, the council just mentioned Leinster:

One of the Divisional Associations – Leinster – have for some causes or other formed an Association on their own...Your Council, so far as they know, have neither by act or deed done anything to prevent a settlement of the present trouble with their friends in Leinster, and they again express the wish and hope that before next season starts a satisfactory settlement may be arranged.¹⁶⁸

In the first conference between both associations in 1923, Wilton seemed to focus on Munster's stagnated past with soccer and not on its potential for the future by stating 'the IFA were open to the South getting more [representation] but could not see how a divisional association such as Munster with eight or ten clubs could be entitled to the same representation as Antrim with over two hundred'.¹⁶⁹ The FAI, on the other hand, looked to further soccer's reach and establish it in places it has never enjoyed popularity before, a

point it made in applying to FIFA.¹⁷⁰ Soccer all over the Free State experienced strong growth throughout the 1920s (in number of clubs formed and spectators attending matches), including in Munster and Connacht, where it historically had never flourished. The newly formed FAI visited Cork in 1922 to re-establish the MFA.¹⁷¹ According to *Football Sports Weekly*, 'One of the greatest difficulties they encountered was the fear that the Dublin people would treat the handful of local enthusiasts as callously as Belfast had done in the past. However, these difficulties were overcome'.¹⁷² The FAI, perhaps mindful of how regional divisions had been treated by the IFA previously, contributed to helping soccer grow in Munster. The Free State body assumed liability for the rent of Victoria Cross Grounds for 15 years and allowed the MFA to retain its affiliation fees until it was on a sound financial footing.¹⁷³ Munster and Leinster also re-instated inter-provincial matches. By 1925, clubs affiliated to Munster had mushroomed from half a dozen clubs in 1922 to over 100.¹⁷⁴ The embodiment of the growth of soccer in Munster was the Cork club Fordson's. In winning the FAIFS Cup in 1926, the first Munster club to do so, the popularity of the club and game in Cork was cemented. Fordson's win was also a major boost to soccer in Waterford city where the game had been growing from strength to strength since 1923.¹⁷⁵ David Toms in *Soccer in Munster: A Social History, 1877-1937*, claims the influence of the FAI/FAIFS in growing soccer in Munster was not as strong as it liked to portray. Regional associations were 'left very much to their own devices' and 'that the increased popularity in Munster was buttressed and led in the main by the success of the revived Munster FA, and the work of the locals involved in playing, in running the game and through their organisation of a whole slew of competitions and cups'.¹⁷⁶ Tynan contends that 'there were even complaints from provincial parts of Leinster regarding the Dublin-centric character of the Free State game'.¹⁷⁷

Connaught also saw a significant increase in activity with the game taking an 'ineradicable root in Galway town, and a club has sprung into being at Tuam and another as far away as Clifden'.¹⁷⁸ A club from Sligo, Sligo Celtic contested the FAI Cup in 1923, the second year after the cup's formation.¹⁷⁹ In the same year, the LFA played a team from Sligo in what was deemed the first inter-provincial match after the split.¹⁸⁰ Straddling the east and the west, Athlone Town won the premier Free State cup trophy in 1924, beating Fordson's in the final in what was a record attendance of 21,000.¹⁸¹

One county in the Free State, the most northerly one, Donegal, was somewhat ignored by the FAI/FAIFS according to Conor Curran. The FAI 'did not, at least initially, have a committee for Ulster clubs located in the Free State'.¹⁸² Curran claims that after 1922:

The county's soccer teams were still rather isolated and a number of these in the north-east of the county continued to enter competitions provided by the Derry and District FA such as St Mary's, Carndonagh and Buncrana Celtic in 1929. The views of the Free State's soccer organisation on the relationship between Donegal's soccer clubs and those in Northern Ireland are unclear...matches between Donegal clubs and those in Derry and Tyrone were quite common but drew little condemnation from either the FAIFS or the IFA, an indication of the lack of attention given to soccer in Donegal from these governing bodies.¹⁸³

Perhaps the uncertainty of the final border make-up contributed to the fluid stance on Donegal, particularly up to 1925. The FAIFS did not allow two other counties in Ulster and also in the Free State, Cavan and Monaghan, however, to engage in cross-border soccer 'where the supply of potential opponents that resided over the border in Northern Ireland had become inaccessible under the rules and regulations of the FAIFS'.¹⁸⁴ This caused much 'anxiety' for Monaghan club, Clones Celtic, who was unable 'to take part in a local and convenient competition' across the border, as a result.¹⁸⁵

Despite the FAIFS's neglect of some regions within the Free State, it oversaw a significant growth in most areas and could rightly claim it governed soccer for five-sixths of the island, compared to the IFA which governed for just one-sixth.¹⁸⁶ During the same period, the IFA saw its growth stall. It was over-reliant on the popularity of just two clubs, Linfield and Belfast Celtic (who re-entered the Irish Football League in 1924). The other clubs were unable to attract large crowds, most matches taking under £30 per match.¹⁸⁷

The geographic make-up and influence of both associations influenced the division. The rapid growth and spread of soccer in the Free State offered the new Dublin headquartered association great security as well as influence. It would never accept subservience to the IFA again, and insisted on being treated on the basis of equality. Given its geographical remit, many in the southern body felt the FAIFS was actually entitled to more say than the IFA. The geographic position was also responsible in making the IFA shift its position, from an initial one of hoping the split was temporary and would end quickly, to realising that significant concessions were required to bring about unity in Irish soccer. The geographic dimension, as with the internal and national political dimensions, was used as a

ploy to gain more power within soccer on the island, particularly by the FAI, yet another example of manipulating the environment 'in pursuit of local interests'.¹⁸⁸

International Sporting Politics

Much of the conflict within Irish soccer was fought across international sporting boundaries, particularly through the FA and FIFA. In some ways the international sports context contributed to division. Garnham contends that the 'requirements of international recognition and competition...led to the hardening of the division, and to the game's essential partition along the line of Ireland's new border'.¹⁸⁹ In other ways it promoted union between both Irish associations. Compared to other Irish organisations and societies who did not have an international dimension, this factor complicated matters for soccer authorities in Ireland. In Chapter Two, the assistance of the home associations to the IFA was assessed. They did the same again once the more permanent split came about in 1921. By 1921, FIFA was a considerably more powerful body than it was in 1912, and it too played a decisive role in the Irish soccer split.

As highlighted above, gaining membership within FIFA ensured the survival of the FAIFS. By the time it was granted provisional membership of FIFA in August 1923, it still was not recognised by the other major power base within global football, the International Board and the home associations of the FA, the SFA, the FA of Wales and the IFA. It followed up its application for membership in 1922 of the International Board with another one in 1923. At its annual meeting in June, the International Board resolved, 'That application for membership from the Football Association of Ireland or the Football Association of the Irish Free State cannot be received'.¹⁹⁰ The main opponents were the IFA delegates who claimed the position was unchanged since the last meeting of the International Board and referred to the failed conference between the two bodies earlier in the year.¹⁹¹

Although accession to the International Board was again snubbed, the Irish Free State government's efforts with the British Foreign Office as well as FIFA's decision to grant the FAIFS provisional membership soon started to pay dividends with the FA. The Governor General of the Irish Free State Tim Healy, also intervened to influence the FA.¹⁹² In the summer of 1923, on receiving notification that the FAI had changed its name to the FAIFS and had restricted its membership to clubs within the territory of the Irish Free State, instead of dismissing the development out of hand, the FA appeared open to recognising

the Free State body.¹⁹³ *Ireland's Saturday Night* claimed that the English body had informed FIFA it believed the FAIFS should be recognised.¹⁹⁴ The paper believed that:

England's expressed opinion has, so far as that is concerned, done more harm than good. It has made it more difficult for the parties to find a solution to the problem. No one wants to see the game hampered, as it may be, by two governing bodies, and something will have to be done to heal the sore and thereby find a means of running the sport as a sport, and by one ruling authority.¹⁹⁵

A conference, with the objective of reaching an agreement on the governance of soccer in Ireland, took place in Liverpool on 18 October 1923 between the English, Scottish and Welsh associations as well as both of the Irish bodies.¹⁹⁶ The IFAB agreed to the IFA and FAIFS 'exercising full jurisdiction within their own area' and 'to the mutual recognition of suspensions'.¹⁹⁷ The conference concluded by recommending that the FAIFS be recognised as an Association with Dominion Status.¹⁹⁸ Commenting on the conference, J.F. Harrison, the FAIFS chairman, showing his commitment to unity within the sport, stated:

Their association had achieved a great victory and that their international status was now fully secured. Even should they fail to come to an agreement with the IFA they were on an equal footing with the other countries affiliated to the International Board. He could hold out no hope of agreement with the Northern body except on grounds of equal representation on an All-Ireland Executive Council.¹⁹⁹

The *Freeman's Journal* was not as optimistic on the outcome of the conference, believing that the status received by the FAIFS as an association with dominion status as opposed to a full association was significant and detracted 'from the completeness of the recommendation and minimises the concession considerably'.²⁰⁰ The FAIFS had achieved a victory of sorts in finally gaining recognition from the British Associations. It hoped this would lead to international fixtures against its neighbours, providing financial security to the fledgling association. The FAIFS also felt there would be closer co-operation with the IFA, many believed it was only a matter of time before re-union was achieved.²⁰¹

Such perceptions were to be deceptive. The 'victory' achieved by the Free State body was of a very limited scale. Although recognised, it was only on a dominion basis. Unlike the Irish Free State which had more autonomy than Northern Ireland, the FAIFS was granted significantly less authority than the IFA by the

International Board in the FAIFS' dealings with the home associations. It would be a further 23 years before England played a team from the south, 37 years for Wales to do so and 38 years for Scotland to meet a Dublin team.²⁰² The IFA was the true victor of the conference, conceding nothing it desired not to.²⁰³ It suited the IFA for the Free State association to have dominion status, thus, allowing it to select players from the Free State for its 'Ireland' team with legitimacy, something it did regularly until 1950.

The FAIFS was confined to play internationals against continental opposition, at the time a considerably less attractive proposition than annual home championship competitions. It represented the Irish Free State at the 1924 Paris Olympics, one of the first occasions the fledgling state was represented in an international sporting contest.²⁰⁴ The Paris Olympics soccer tournament was just for amateurs. The first full professional international for an FAIFS team only took place in 1926, against Italy.²⁰⁵ By 1930 the FAIFS's only full internationals were against Italy and Belgium.²⁰⁶ Although the IFA governed for an area far smaller than the FAIFS's territory, it chose the 'Ireland' team to play against England, Scotland and Wales each year. This provided the IFA with enormous leverage in negotiations with the FAIFS.

The 1923 Liverpool Conference resulted in club teams from England, Scotland and Wales playing against Free State league opposition.²⁰⁷ This continued until 1925 when pressure from the IFA resulted in a decision at another conference in Liverpool in 1925, this time with all home associations in attendance, but no representation from the FAIFS. At the conference, held on 5 September, the delegates decided that all clubs from the four home associations must not play matches in the Irish Free State during the close season. No action was taken against clubs for playing matches on the Continent during the close season, a clear affront to the FAIFS. The *Football Sports Weekly* was scathing of the IFA delegates at the conference for refusing home association clubs the right to play in the Free State.²⁰⁸ The paper saw it as a further attempt by the IFA to starve the FAIFS of money, a means of forcing the southern body to agree to its terms.²⁰⁹ Although this was another setback for the FAIFS, it had been offered proof earlier in 1925 that the most powerful association, the FA, was more flexible than the other home associations. After the conference in 1924

between the IFA and the FAIFS broke down over the issue of the IFA chairman being the permanent chairman of an all-Ireland selection committee, the FAIFS lobbied the FA, who expressed the view 'that both Irish associations should agree to alternate Chairmanship and international matches being played alternately in Dublin and Belfast', resulting in the IFA conceding the point.²¹⁰ The FAIFS, on top of using its reliable ally, FIFA, started to lobby the FA more extensively, particularly on the issue of the IFA 'monopolising' the name 'Ireland'.²¹¹ It obtained the assistance of the Free State government in 1930 to bring pressure on the FA to eliminate 'the absurdity of the north-east team masquerading as Ireland'.²¹² The FA, under pressure from the Free State government, changed its mind on the rights of players representing associations in international fixtures outside of the territory they were born in. It proposed a motion at the International Board annual meeting of 1931, 'In International matches the qualification of players shall be birth within the area of the National Association'.²¹³ This motion was supported by FIFA but rejected by the IFA, and the Scottish and Welsh FA's and, therefore, defeated. Although the IFA achieved a victory of sorts at the International Board meeting, it was coming under increased pressure from the FA to resolve the impasse with the southern body. This pressure led to another conference in 1932 between the two Irish associations.

Both the IFA and FAIFS used the international sporting political sphere to promote their agendas. Heather Dichter has shown that it was not uncommon for political entities such as Cold War-era communist-bloc countries to use international sporting federations as a means to gain international recognition and validity.²¹⁴ The FAIFS, through FIFA, gained international recognition and security. In some ways, this decision also reduced the likelihood of an all-Ireland body by creating two associations with paramount powers on the island. The FAIFS, also through FIFA and later through the FA, attempted to stop the IFA practice of selecting players for its international team from all parts of Ireland. This action was taken, not primarily to maintain the division, but ultimately to force the IFA to agree to its terms for an all-Ireland body. The IFA also used its powerful position within the international arena, as the fourth oldest association in the world and a member of the International Board, again not to maintain division, but to squeeze the FAIFS to agree to its terms. It wanted unity in Irish soccer, but as long as it maintained its dominance.

Conclusion

The partitioning of Ireland was not a decisive factor in the partitioning of Irish soccer. The national political environment contributed to divisions, of that there is no doubt, but it is a simplistic understanding of partition and the many complexities it possessed to deem it as the decisive factor in leading to the Irish soccer split. It is important to go beyond the high politics of partition and to show the way it 'was constructed and imagined by Irish people themselves'.²¹⁵

From the evidence presented, it is clear the division was overwhelmingly caused by matters of a deep rooted internal political nature. By analysing the 'lived experience' of soccer administrators and not just 'the grand topographies of national and international history',²¹⁶ it is clear the make-up and structures of the IFA, its bias in selections of players and venues from Belfast, and its neglect of regions beyond its north-east sphere of influence were the issues that exercised the Leinster soccer administrators and Dublin media outlets more than anything else.

It is also too simplistic to believe the FAI did not re-unify with the IFA because of the new political make-up of the country. There is no doubt that Irish soccer administrators were as confused and perplexed by partition and what it meant for them, as everyone else was. There are many incidents showing the FAI would have readily accepted re-union on the basis of equality. The IFA, headquartered in the new jurisdiction of Northern Ireland with many unionists in its fold, shared the belief that many leading unionist politicians had, there should be no partition in Irish sport. Whilst many sporting and other organisations consisted of broadly homogenous membership bases, soccer did not fit into this category. This certainly made it more difficult for soccer to maintain unity in a divided island. Soccer's experience in the decade after partition shows in many ways the ambiguity and complexity of Irish identities and society. Both bodies also demonstrated fluidity, flexibility and in some instances, 'common sense', in how they manipulated the national political, intra-governance, geographic, and international sporting political dimensions in pursuit of 'local interests'.²¹⁷ The soccer example shows the two Irish political jurisdictions did not 'impose their values and boundaries on local society'.²¹⁸ The soccer authorities, like other social and cultural organisations, were free to react to the creation of the Irish border as they saw fit.

The split was nurtured by internal power primarily. Both bodies vied for the right to govern soccer in Ireland. The IFA did not see itself just governing for the six counties of Northern Ireland, it saw itself as the national association for all of Ireland. It maintained the name, the Irish Football Association, and selected players from the whole island to assert this claim. The FAI also wanted to govern soccer for all of Ireland. It conceded its right to govern within the six counties only when it saw this as the optimum way to achieve international recognition, a necessity for it to survive. The conferences held between the two bodies from 1923 to 1932 showed this battle for power clearly. Although both bodies appeared to seek unity, confirming so on many occasions, it was based on each body's interpretation of what unity suited each association best. In many ways, the decade after the split saw a power struggle fought mainly on internal governance issues. In essence, those internal political factors were the primary reasons that led to and have maintained the Irish soccer split up to the present day.

The partition in Irish soccer may have coincided with the political partition of the island in 1921 but its causes and circumstances were different. Ironically, the partition in Irish soccer demonstrates that the political and legal partition of Ireland was not followed by a social and cultural partition.²¹⁹ Soccer administrators in Ireland viewed their division as an internal matter, quite separate from the political partition. Tannam has shown that politically and economically, both Irelands moved further and further apart.²²⁰ Whilst there was little cross-border cooperation politically between both jurisdictions, from 1921 to 1932, the IFA and FAI held conferences, corresponded regularly and co-operated through inter-league competitions. Both bodies actively sought to end the partition in soccer. Politically, Ulster unionists looked to cement partition whilst, as O'Halloran has shown, the Irish Free State's public rhetoric opposing partition was not matched by its actions of doing nothing to prevent it.²²¹ The 'ambiguity, fluidity, and uncertainty...common to life in borderlands generally' that Readman, Radding and Bryant speak of, was prevalent in Irish soccer's reaction to partition too, 'a fact that runs counter to the assumption that borders neatly divide one group, with one set of experiences, from another, with quite different experiences'.²²²

Chapter Five – The Effects of Partition on Other Sports (1920-1930)

Introduction

Most sports in Ireland, like soccer, demonstrated that the political partition of Ireland was not followed by a social and cultural partition.¹ The sporting example shows the Irish border became as much a zone of interaction as it was one ‘of demarcation and division’.²

Readman, Radding and Bryant, in speaking of national identities, claim that many ‘analyses are predicated on unhelpfully binary assumptions about the character of these identities, the accent often being on the development of mutual antagonisms, divisions, and “Othering”’. They further claim that ‘social experience of borderlands suggests that the reality was more complex, that national allegiances could be ambivalent, weak, trumped by other loyalties, and reflexively adjustable depending on circumstances’.³ This holds true for sports in Ireland, where on the whole, most sports, even ones with multiple identities in their fold, remained governed on an all-Ireland basis after partition and focused on what united them, not what divided them. The split in soccer, was in many ways, an anomaly in post-partition Ireland.

When Ireland was partitioned, sporting bodies still had to adapt to two political jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. Paul Rouse claims this ‘presented obvious challenges in the formulation of policy’. With most sporting organisations pre-dating partition, they now ‘were obliged to accommodate it. This proved no straightforward task and different organizations responded in different ways’.⁴ With both Irish political jurisdictions not imposing ‘their values and boundaries on local society’, sports organisations, like other social and cultural organisations, were free to react to the creation of the Irish border as they saw fit.⁵ This resulted in a ‘myriad of reactions, counter-reactions, and interactions’ from different sports.⁶ As mentioned above, most remained united, some became united, whilst others became divided. The example of sport shows the complexities that existed within the multiple Irish identities and the ambiguity and confusion that surrounded partition. By analysing how other sports navigated factors such as national politics, internal politics and geography, our understanding on the reasons for the split in soccer is enhanced.

The National Political Environment

All organisations were impacted by the creation of a political border on the island of Ireland, even bodies that remained governed on an all-Ireland basis after partition. Sporting bodies

were no different. The GAA regularly liked to portray itself as a non-political body.⁷ Through its organisation of a mass protest against permits from the British authorities on 'Gaelic Sunday' in 1918, its support for the Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents Fund, and the active military participation of many of its members, it clearly was a political body and one most closely aligned with Sinn Féin and its military arm.⁸ Richard Holt argues that the GAA provides 'arguably the most striking instance of politics shaping sport in modern history'.⁹ Although it 'was cross-border in almost everything that it did, it was not cross-community'.¹⁰ In reality, there was no place within the GAA for anyone from a unionist tradition.

The GAA was trenchantly opposed to partition. Opening a GAA ground in Rosculligan, County Cavan in 1923, the GAA president Dan McCarthy, who was also a TD in Dáil Éireann, said the Association 'should not recognise partition' although the GAA was 'open to all Irishmen'.¹¹ Its policy on partition was similar to that of leading nationalists in the south: it chose to ignore it. There is no mention of partition in the minutes of the Ulster GAA council from 1921 to 1922. Secretary of the Ulster GAA council, Eoin O'Duffy was one of the leading figures of the IRA in Ulster by mid-1921. His platform speech was that the IRA could 'use the lead' against loyalists who bore arms. The term 'Northern Ireland' was avoided in meetings and documents. It hoped the border would be short-lived.¹²

Almost immediately after partition 'GAA activities in Northern Ireland became embroiled in controversy, mostly on account of clashes with the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the north's new police force'.¹³ As the new northern jurisdiction adopted a siege mentality, numerous GAA members were interned without trial between 1922 and 1924 on the prison ship *Argenta*.¹⁴ Most famously, ten members of the Monaghan Gaelic football team were arrested by 'B' Special constables in Tyrone on their way to the Ulster football final in Derry on 14 January 1922.¹⁵ Their arrests led to the IRA kidnapping of prominent unionists in Fermanagh and Tyrone. Under pressure from the provisional government in the south and the British government, James Craig, the Northern Ireland prime minister, at one stage threatening to resign over the incident, reluctantly agreed to their release in March. Thus, 'the first Northern Ireland government narrowly avoided being brought down by a GAA team'.¹⁶

Partition led to many practical difficult decisions for the GAA too. Its long-standing ban on members of the Crown forces was retained but reinterpreted: members of the new police force, an Garda Síochána and the Irish Army of the Irish Free State were admitted to

the GAA, but RUC members and Ulster Specials were barred from the outset as front-line United Kingdom forces.¹⁷ In 1922, the GAA hierarchy also covertly removed the ban on oath-swearing public servants, after the Free State gained sovereignty. The Promissory Oaths Act (Northern Ireland), 1923, required all public servants, including schoolteachers, to swear allegiance. Some northern nationalists initially refused to do so. The Central Council confirmed, that 'the taking of the oath did not debar teachers from participating in GAA affairs'.¹⁸ In this instance the GAA was echoing the Irish revolution's reality over rhetoric where, according to Arthur Aughey, the ideals of 1916 were 'absorbed by the practice of limited constitutional government' where 'the institutional character and structure of the state after 1921...bore a striking resemblance to the British model'.¹⁹

Local councils in Northern Ireland became forums of unionist discrimination with very few playing fields being allocated to the GAA. Gaelic games were not seen as sports, but as nationalist political symbols. Northern 'rule became more adverse than Westminster rule for Gaelic sports'.²⁰ According to Dónal McAnallen, while 'the vast majority of northern GAA members remained outside the IRA ranks, more than enough of them were involved in trying to bring down the state for the state to treat the association with suspicion'.²¹ The GAA in Northern Ireland had no option but to play its games without causing disruption immediately after the onset of partition. The GAA was forthright in its opposition to partition and condemned sports, like soccer, it saw as being partitionist. Given its homogenous make-up, it never had to confront or acknowledge the border as openly as soccer was forced to do. Despite the GAA's rhetoric, though, it too accepted the reality of partition through its favouring of Ulster counties outside of Northern Ireland (see below) and its acceptance of northern-based teachers taking the oath under the Promissory Oaths Act (Northern Ireland), 1923.

Boxing shares a similar demographic to soccer, fraternised by Protestants and Catholics primarily from the working classes. Unlike soccer, though, the sport remained governed on an all-Ireland basis after partition. The boxing example shows that class cannot readily be given as a factor in causing the Irish soccer split. Whilst many sports that were played and administered by people from the upper and middle classes remained all-Ireland bodies, some sports fitting that profile, such as motorcar racing, were partitioned and the working-class sport, boxing, remained governed on a 32-county basis. Demonstrating 'the complexities of the nature of Irish identity and its relationship to sports', boxing remained

popular within unionism and nationalism whilst strongly supported by members of the military and security forces in both jurisdictions.²² With the creation of two new political entities in Ireland, the all-island police force the RIC was replaced by an Garda Síochána in the Irish Free State and the RUC in Northern Ireland. The two new police forces, reflecting political opinion at large, practically ignored each other. As affiliated bodies within the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA), they both cooperated with and competed against each other in the boxing arena, including members from each force crossing the border for boxing events, an example of the border acting as a zone of interaction.²³ In one such middleweight contest, the RUC's Jim Magill defeated an Gardaí's Jack Chase in an official box-off to represent Ireland at the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Magill was, however:

prevented from travelling when the Ulster Council of the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) refused to endorse his selection. The accepted wisdom was that the Council was informed by the Stormont (Northern Ireland) government that it would be "inappropriate" for a member of the RUC to compete under the Irish tricolour representing the Irish Free State, despite the fact that Magill was a seasoned Irish international.²⁴

It was a striking feature of post-partition Ireland that many leading unionist politicians who were involved in sports governing bodies, whilst strongly opposing Irish unity politically within an independent Ireland, were promoters of unity and all-island cooperation in sport. This double-handed approach of firmly held political opinions co-existing with softer cultural approaches was common in post-partition Ireland. This supports David Miller's assertion of the identity complexities for the Ulster Protestant community at the time.²⁵ This was the case with many other organisations and societies, too.

The Irish Bowling Association (IBA), the all-Ireland governing body for bowls headquartered in Belfast, sought for increased cooperation with southern Ireland after partition. Speaking in October 1922, the IBA president Thomas McMullan claimed that 'if we had bowling greens in all the towns in Ireland and ceased to talk politics at every opportunity we would soon create a better spirit than that which prevailed at present'. He hoped 'that the serious troubles in the South would soon end, and that the South would become as prosperous as the North'.²⁶ McMullan's call for increased unity throughout Ireland in bowls contrasted sharply with his

political views as an Ulster Unionist MP in the newly created Northern Ireland parliament.²⁷ Similarly, when speaking at an Irish Hockey Union (IHU) dinner, the Northern Ireland Minister for Labour and future prime minister, John Andrews commented on the peculiar scenario where Irishmen had:

throughout the generations that had gone they had rarely if ever ceased fighting with one another, and side by side with that they as sportsmen found that they had always been good pals and the very best friends...for Irishmen, no matter in what part of Ireland they lived, that the sooner they learned to put the spirit that was in sport into their public dealings with one another the better it would be for each and all of them.²⁸

This was echoed by unionist members of the IFA who shared the belief that many leading unionist politicians had, there should be no partition in Irish sport.

The violence that engulfed Ireland immediately after the First World War impacted on the prospect of cricket uniting under one umbrella organisation in Ireland in the short term. The shooting dead by the IRA of a spectator, Kathleen Wright, at a cricket match in Dublin (see p. 93) led to the Northern Cricket Union cancelling the senior and schools inter-provincials against Leinster scheduled for Dublin that year 'owing to the present state of affairs'.²⁹ A year later, it also cancelled the schools inter-provincial due to the 'situation that had arisen in Dublin', with the start of the civil war.³⁰ The northern body resisted a number of attempts made by Leinster to amalgamate during the years of conflict. Once the situation calmed in Ireland, it was ready to consider unification. With their Protestant and unionist connections, golf clubs had a difficult time during the War of Independence and the ensuing civil war. A number of clubhouses were burned down and competitions were disrupted.³¹ Despite these setbacks, the Golfing Union of Ireland remained an all-Ireland body after partition. Sports like cricket and golf, with strong Protestant and unionist links, were free to make decisions free of the 'iron-grip of the nation state'³² in pursuit of their own 'local interests'.³³

The governing bodies for horse racing, the Turf Club, established in 1790, and the Irish National Hunt Steeplechase Committee, established in 1866, remained all-Ireland bodies after partition. During the First World War and the Irish revolutionary years, the Turf Club became more unionist in outlook.³⁴ Military involvement grew significantly during this period. In 1912, 23 per cent of its members bore military

titles but by 1922 this had increased to 63 per cent.³⁵ As previously highlighted, Frank Brooke, the Turf Club's senior steward was assassinated by the IRA in July 1920 during the War of Independence and many great houses with racing connections were destroyed.³⁶ Remarkably, both unionists and nationalists involved in horse racing quickly overcame their differences once Ireland was partitioned. An example of the sport's ability to adapt and accommodate differing political viewpoints was seen a mere six months after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The Turf Club sanctioned a race meeting at the Phoenix Park racecourse that became known as 'the IRA meeting'.³⁷ The purpose of the meeting was to raise funds to help disabled members of the IRA. Later, the Turf Club passed resolutions of sympathy on the deaths of the two leading figures of the provisional government of the Irish Free State, Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, both of whom died in August 1922.³⁸ Horse racing in Ireland showed that people who were directly in opposition with each other politically and militarily could settle their differences, and in a very short period of time. According to Fergus D'Arcy, 'the uneasy sporting alliance of gentry and rural middle class somehow survived: the joy of racing and its rivalry continued to transcend ancient enmities'.³⁹ The commercial nature of the sport was also a factor in maintaining unity. Horse racing was a business for many stakeholders, regardless of class or political view. To divide would have been costly for all involved in the sport in Ireland.

Tom Hunt has shown that an early version of the Irish Olympic Council was established by the committed nationalist and GAA member J.J. Keane, with the help of 'an eclectic mix of men, for many of whom a period of service in the British army was their common career denominator'.⁴⁰ Michael Hopkinson's observation holds true for many sports, that 'stances taken at the time were frequently less hard-line than they appeared superficially and retrospective accounts by contemporaries tend to emphasise consistency and dogmatism as opposed to flexibility'.⁴¹

Partition was the primary reason for the division that engulfed athletics and cycling for decades. The different athletic bodies operating in Ireland attempted to unite under one umbrella in the early 1920s, the National Athletic and Cycling Association of Ireland (NACAI).⁴² J.J. Keane spearheaded the move and, showing less flexibility than his inclusion of ex-British military personnel on the Irish Olympic

Council, prohibited British soldiers, navy men and police on active service in Ireland from joining the NACAI. This was unacceptable to many Belfast members.⁴³ The NACAI removed the exclusionary rule and decided to hold the national championships on Saturdays and Sundays on alternative years to accommodate Ulster members.⁴⁴ The unity was paper thin from the very outset, though, with no Ulster delegates present at the NACAI Annual Congress in May 1924 that ratified the merger.⁴⁵

Open conflict broke out in Easter 1925 over an event that northern athletes organised at the home of soccer club, Belfast Celtic. At the event, on top of athletics, the meeting included a two hundred yards whippet and an open trot handicap race. Under the laws of the NACAI and the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), animal events and the associated gambling that accompanied those events contravened their rules on amateurism.⁴⁶ Belfast clubs withdrew from the NACAI and founded the Northern Ireland Amateur Athletics, Cycling and Cross-Country Association in July 1925.⁴⁷ What started as 'a domestic dispute soon took on an international dimension and became politicised. Unionist-minded administrators and Northern Ireland politicians used the opportunity presented by the dispute to pursue their agenda to achieve separate recognition for Northern Ireland in sport'.⁴⁸ This was markedly different from attempts by unionist politicians seeking to maintain Irish unity in other sports. The unionist members of the northern association deeply resented the Dublin control of the NACAI, the using of the tricolour for international competitions and the provincial and county structure of the NACAI, aping the GAA structure.⁴⁹

The NACAI was not overly concerned by the secession of many of the northern clubs, believing its international standing would help ease the parent body through murky waters. With the British Amateur Athletics Association (AAA) forming a branch in Northern Ireland in 1928, a move not blocked by the IAAF, this safety valve was removed.⁵⁰ In this instance, similar to the FAI's use of FIFA, northern athletic administrators used the AAA to gain recognition and validity. The NACAI and the northern branch of the AAA held a number of conferences over the coming years, but to no avail. Both sides remained intransigent, the northern association looking to eke out its future under the British umbrella, the NACAI immovable in

relinquishing all-Ireland control. It ultimately was a battle lost by the NACAI, who in its quest to resist partition in a sporting sphere, failed to realise the political reality of partition. After 1934, Ireland's right to compete in the Olympic Games as a 32-county entity was lost. It led to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspending the NACAI from Olympic competition, a suspension that spanned decades.⁵¹ The athletics and cycling split was dominated by the national political question, unlike the soccer split which was dominated by internal political factors. It permeated almost every decision made by the NACAI which simply refused to recognise the political partition of Ireland, declaring it would not 'represent a mutilated Ireland in international world competition', resulting in its decades long international isolation.⁵²

A common reaction from organisations, including sporting ones, that were governed on an all-Ireland basis pre-partition, was to remain so post-partition. John Whyte observed that 'organisations founded before 1921 tend to continue on their previous all-Ireland...basis unless something occurs to change them'.⁵³ Generally, the northern government gave no clear political direction on what path organisations themselves should take once Ireland was partitioned. In fact, an anomalous position existed whereby unionist politicians sought as much divergence politically between the north and the south on the one hand, and actively sought unity in sport on the other. Leary states that 'the outlines of the political state were rarely, if ever, coterminous with the lived experience of borderland communities'.⁵⁴ This is true of the sporting example too, with most sporting organisations that existed pre-1921, choosing to remain governed on an all-Ireland basis afterwards, thus showing that the soccer example is an anomaly.

Internal Politics

Despite the pivotal role played by administrative bodies in shaping sports, there has been little focus to date on the importance of internal politics and governance within sports. Analysing internal dynamics within organisations provides a unique avenue to assess partition 'as recognized and contested by ordinary people on the ground'.⁵⁵ With the partitioning of Ireland, all sporting bodies had to look at their internal governance structures and to take account of there being two political entities on the island.

The GAA, whilst never wavering from remaining an all-Ireland body, had in its fold members from Ulster who wanted special treatment for the counties based in the north. A motion was tabled by Ulster officials in April 1923, 'to direct the attention of Congress to the importance of keeping the GAA alive in the North-East counties'. The GAA central council in Dublin rejected the proposal to appoint a full-time paid special organiser for the six counties. According to Dónal McAnallen, 'There was already in these counties a sense of abandonment by the rest of Ireland in the sporting realm as in other matters – a theme that would recur for many years'.⁵⁶ Máiréad Nic Craith has shown that, similarly, the Irish language movement, the Gaelic League, struggled in Ulster after partition and felt isolated from the rest of Ireland. Within twelve months, it ceased to function in south Ulster. The Ulster organiser had to escape from Northern Ireland and the Gaelic League in the province 'was later to re-emerge in the form of *Comhaltas Uladh de Chonradh na Gaeilge*'.⁵⁷

In rugby, any inclination for the northern branch to disaffiliate from the IRFU after partition was prevented by the actions of the parent body in Dublin, who made great strides to accommodate its northern members. Other than occasional complaints of annual general meetings always being held in Dublin and an unfair allocation of tickets for international matches being offered to Ulster people, the northern branch was very happy with how it was treated by the IRFU.⁵⁸ Echoing its success in inter-provincial matches against Leinster and Munster, Ulster players were well represented in the Irish international teams selected after partition.⁵⁹ To the detriment of upgrading Lansdowne Road in Dublin, the IRFU sanctioned and allocated funds for the erection of a new rugby stadium in Belfast in the 1920s, at Ravenhill.⁶⁰ The new ground accommodated over 20,000 people, including 4,000 covered stand seats. This allowed the IRFU to continue its tradition of hosting international matches in Belfast and Dublin, unlike the rugby unions in England and Scotland who did not countenance internationals outside of London or Edinburgh respectively. Effusive in praise, the IRFU Northern Branch claimed, 'At the present time in Dublin they had the finest body of sportsmen it was possible to get, and any proposition for the good of the game was fairly and reasonably met by the Irish Union'.⁶¹

The northern branch was also happy with its representation on the IRFU governing body. It held two of the five seats on the international selection committee and it had equal representation to Leinster on the IRFU council.⁶² Of the 16 presidents of the IRFU elected between partition and the outbreak of the Second World War, nine were from Leinster, six

were from Ulster and one from Munster.⁶³ All past-presidents were allowed to sit on the IRFU council, giving them significant leverage. At one stage there were 20 past-presidents on the 38-member council, something opposed by Leinster, Munster and Connaught, but not by Ulster.⁶⁴ The marked difference in the treatment of Ulster by the IRFU headquarters in Dublin to the treatment of Leinster by the IFA headquarters in Belfast on issues relating to venues, international players selected, committee representation and finances was stark.

The governing body for boxing, the IABA, made strides to maintain unity by accommodating its northern members. Headquartered in Dublin, as boxing grew in popularity in Belfast, the IABA decided to alternate its annual meetings and venue for international events between Dublin and Belfast. Reflecting an understanding often found wanting in soccer, the IABA chairman, Dr Robert Rowlette from Dublin, justified the decision:

There could be no doubt that in the past it had been a hardship upon Belfast to have always to travel for the annual meeting to Dublin, no doubt at much inconvenience. The new arrangement would tend to equalise that, and he had no doubt it would be for the general good of the sport.⁶⁵

Echoing the federalist approach adopted by many other sporting bodies that remained all-Ireland ones, in 1926 the IABA was re-organised to include a central council made up of three representatives from each newly created provincial council.⁶⁶ The IABA granted the provincial councils a large degree of autonomy and inaugurated inter-provincial championships to stimulate interest in boxing.⁶⁷ The new structures saw a remarkable turnaround in success for the IABA. Affiliated clubs increased from 27 in 1928 to 66 in 1929. The Ulster council, with increased autonomy, was happy to remain within the IABA fold, as it saw strong growth in its number of affiliated clubs too.⁶⁸

One sport that achieved a lasting union after partition in Ireland was cricket. Despite cricket being the most popular sport in Ireland in the 1860s and 1870s, with an estimated 500 cricket clubs established throughout the country, there was no national body overseeing the game until 1890.⁶⁹ At that time, it was played in most parts of Ireland by Protestants and Catholics from all classes.⁷⁰ Attempts were made mainly by Leinster cricket administrators, and thwarted, to have a unified governing body for Ireland for the next 30 years with northern members believing there was a

bias against them. The Northern Cricket Union believed cricket was dominated by Leinster and Munster. Dublin would control the national team selection and venue locations, and there was little appetite to financially contribute to a body where little representation for the north was envisaged.⁷¹

Immediately after the First World War, the Leinster Cricket Union initiated overtures again to entice the Northern Cricket Union to join an Irish Cricket Union. The Northern Cricket Union agreed to re-starting the annual inter-provincial match with Leinster which had lapsed for eight years, but felt 'that the present time was not opportune for discussing the proposed formation of an Irish Cricket Union'.⁷² Junior and schools inter-provincials with Leinster were also resurrected. The smoothing of relations between Leinster and Ulster was certainly helped by the increase in representation at international level for Ulster players, with three Ulster players being selected for Ireland for the first time in February 1923 followed by four selected to play against Scotland in May 1923.⁷³ That same year Irish cricket authorities agreed to form an Irish Cricket Union, 'composed of an equal number of Northern and Southern Representatives, and having as its first Chairman', Robert Erskine, the Northern Cricket Union's chairman. The northern body was happy with the result, stating it 'has given rise to much satisfaction, and will, it is hoped, result eventually in a regular series of International Matches, in addition to a Gentlemen of Ireland Match for Belfast annually'.⁷⁴ Like the other provincial unions, the northern body still ran its own league and cup fixtures for senior and junior levels. Once the North-West (Derry) Cricket Union joined the fold in 1925, cricket in Ireland was unified under one body.⁷⁵

The first decade after partition saw a vast improvement in relations between north and south in cricket, borne by equality in dealings never realised before. A sign of closer co-operation was the choosing by the Irish Cricket Union of Belfast as a venue for the first time for an international representative game against Wales in 1924.⁷⁶ The union formed in 1923 was cemented over the following years, leaving cricket as it is today, governed on an all-Ireland basis. It is clear the substantial overtures made by Leinster; in significantly increasing Ulster representation on Irish international teams; giving equal membership on the Irish Cricket Union council; the first chairman being from Ulster; and allowing the provincial councils to remain

largely autonomous, were instrumental in forging an agreement. Through addressing internal governance issues in a way satisfactory to all, Irish cricket was able to unify successfully.

Even though tennis players from Northern Ireland were eligible to represent Ireland in the Davis Cup, they were occasionally confused and disgruntled over their status by their lack of representation on the Irish team.⁷⁷ To cement the Irish Lawn Tennis Association's (ILTA) future as an all-island body, it granted increased provincial control to its regions in 1927. Three provincial councils were set up, Leinster & Connaught, Ulster and Munster, under a general council with its headquarters in Dublin. The provincial councils thereafter organised inter-provincial matches, inter-club matches and controlled all internal affairs of the province. The ILTA also agreed for the general council to consist of ten members from Leinster & Connaught, six from Ulster and five from Munster.⁷⁸ The tennis example presents another case of showing that the democratic and federalist approach to internal governance was the clearest path to internal unity.

Hockey in Ireland experienced relatively little turbulence with the partitioning of Ireland. The IHU was formed in 1893 with provincial branches established in 1898 and 1899. The IHU was structured similarly to a federation with the four provinces partially autonomous.⁷⁹ With the IHU primarily responsible for just selecting the international team, there were far fewer opportunities for conflict. The selection committee was made up of five, with a member from each province plus an additional member elected which tended to alternate between Leinster and Ulster. International fixtures were also alternated between the north and the south.⁸⁰

Motor cycling in Ireland is an all-Ireland body under the governance of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland (MCUI). Like many other all-island sports, each provincial council has enjoyed considerable autonomy in the running of its internal affairs.⁸¹ Unlike the MCUI, motorcar racing has been divided north and south since the early days of partition.⁸² Ulster members believed the governing body for motorcar racing in Ireland, the Royal Irish Automobile Club (the RIAC) was 'neglecting the sporting side',⁸³ a view echoed by the MCUI who organised the motorcar racing on top of the motor cycling racing calendar instead of the RIAC up until the mid-1930s.⁸⁴ They decided to contact the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) in

London to set up an Ulster division. Even though Ulster split from the RIAC, it was an amicable split. Cooperation on the customs border, supporting each other's races and jointly organising an all-island Circuit of Ireland Rally are just some of the examples of how north and south in motorcar racing, although divided, worked closely together after partition.⁸⁵

Whilst sporting organisations did not have to ape the political partition of Ireland, most had to acknowledge the existence of the Irish border through their internal structures. Given that most sports were not obliged to follow the partition of Ireland with their own partition, it is only natural that the intra-governance make-up of organisations was a crucial factor for maintaining unity within those sports, or not. Internal political factors were decisive in determining whether sporting bodies remained or became all-Ireland bodies after partition or in the case of soccer divided. Those bodies that democratised and federalised their structures and accommodated the new political reality on the island tended to remain all-Ireland bodies, whilst those that ignored matters of internal governance tended to divide.

Geography

The geographic and identity dimensions within some sports are as complex, fluid and ambiguous as they are within wider Irish society. The identity make-up of those who played, supported and administered sports was important in determining reactions to the partition of Ireland. In most instances, there was internal unity within many sports as members and supporters came from similar backgrounds, regardless of location.

The GAA never countenanced anything other than remaining an all-Ireland body and given its homogenous Catholic make-up, unlike with soccer, there was little danger of internal divisions relating to partition and sectarianism. Through its ban on 'foreign games', it fiercely opposed sports it saw as foreign, in reality sports it saw as British. Its mouthpiece, the *Gaelic Athlete*, described soccer and rugby as 'exotic imitations' of Britishness, describing Irishmen who played those codes as 'blatant Imperialists for all Ireland to roll itself up in the Union Jack and sing and toast "Irish Nationality" with a leer on its lying lip'.⁸⁶ In many ways, the GAA did not face the difficulties that sports like soccer did. It did not have to change its hand with the onset of partition. It remained an organisation almost solely catering for Catholics and nationalists. Unlike soccer, it did not have to find solutions to

accommodate multiple identities. Even though, by some of its actions it accepted the realities of partition, it faced no internal challenges by publicly opposing it.

In the case of rugby, the willingness to accommodate Ulster may certainly be explained by the make-up of the IRFU council, where the overwhelming number of members were upper-middle class Protestants who were inclined to have unionist sympathies. For example, of the nine presidents of the IRFU from Leinster between partition and the outbreak of the Second World War, seven were Protestants, many of them with 'strong links with one of the Free State's most ostentatiously unionist institutions, Trinity College Dublin'.⁸⁷ Those involved in governing rugby within Ireland had other 'potent social binding' agents according to Liam O'Callaghan, such as education, work, church and leisure activities.⁸⁸ These factors were crucial in ensuring unity within rugby after partition. In fact, during the years immediately following partition, most opposition to the IRFU did not come from Ulster but from Munster and Connaught as well as from large pockets in Leinster. Many in the Irish Free State believed that rugby in Ireland was governed by a Protestant upper-middle class minority who were too unionist in outlook.⁸⁹ The IRFU's prohibition of matches on Sundays, its preference for a rugby union or Union Jack flag over the Irish tricolour (see below), and its toasting of the British King, even cancelling fixtures on the death of King George V, proved controversial decisions that demonstrated the IRFU administrators had more in common with the majority opinion of Northern Ireland than with that of the Irish Free State.⁹⁰ Whilst the IRFU's "unionism" irked many in the Irish Free State, they did not have enough power to effectively oppose the IRFU. Unlike in soccer, there was no body as large or as powerful as the LFA to challenge the IRFU's hegemony.

Bowls, like rugby, cricket and hockey tended to be dominated by upper-middle class Protestants, sharing the same identity throughout Ireland. The bowls community in Ireland north and south was, on the whole, a homogenous group made of Protestants primarily. Of the 14 members who attended the inaugural Irish Free State Bowling League meeting in 1927, at least 11 were Protestants, one was Catholic, with the other two members' religious affiliations unknown.⁹¹

A factor that helped cricket governance to unite in Ireland was the change in identity of those who supported the game. By the time of partition, cricket had retreated from its popularity amongst Protestants and Catholics of all classes. A combination of factors saw the game's demise in much of Ireland: attacks from the GAA on what it saw as a 'foreign

game'; the inability of cricket in Ireland to unite under one governing body for decades; and the 'unravelling politics of Ireland' all contributed to cricket in Ireland dwarfing in size and becoming mainly the preserve of upper-middle class Protestants.⁹² Ironically, the contraction of the game in Ireland in many ways facilitated unity from a governance perspective where it shared a similar identity profile to other all-Ireland sports such as rugby, bowls and hockey.

The legacy of one of Ireland's most famous greyhounds, Master McGrath, who won the Waterloo Cup on three occasions, was negatively impacted by partition. Even though Master McGrath competed years before partition in the 1860s and 1870s and was whelped in County Waterford in the south of Ireland, the legacy of Master McGrath 'was collapsed into a Northern Irish rather than an all-Irish context' after partition.⁹³ Master McGrath who resided most of his life in the mainly Protestant town of Lurgan, acquired a status in the imagination as a representative of the Protestant community. The fact that the dog was owned by a British peer of the realm, Lord Lurgan, influenced Catholics in Lurgan and Northern Ireland as a whole to disassociate themselves from the dog.⁹⁴ The development of Master McGrath as a symbol of local Protestantism was cemented by the way that local soccer, rugby, cricket, hockey and golf clubs adopted the town's coat of arms as their club badge which included an image of Master McGrath, those sports being mainly patronised by Protestants in the town.⁹⁵

Symbols of identity became hugely important in a post-partition Ireland. Michael Billig argues that nation-states looking to establish their sovereignty and who face internal challenges are more likely to consciously display 'symbols of nationhood'.⁹⁶ He refers to the national flag as symbolising 'the sacred character of the nation; it is revered by loyal citizens and ritually defiled by those who wish to make a protest'.⁹⁷ With both Irish jurisdictions looking to assert their 'sovereignty and gain de facto recognition', both entities 'turned to the promotion of state symbols' such as flags, anthems and other emblems.⁹⁸ Clare O'Halloran showed, that in spite of partition, the Irish Free State used the symbol of a 'nationalist map image...of the whole island as a distinct geographical entity' in 'newspaper mastheads and on postage stamps after 1922' to assert its aspirations for a united Ireland.⁹⁹ The northern government appropriated the arms of the great O'Neill clan as the centrepiece of the 'arms of Northern Ireland' in 1923 to establish a historical personality for the new constitutional entity'.¹⁰⁰ Sporting bodies, particularly those governed on an all-Ireland basis

had to be mindful of the importance of such symbols after the partition of Ireland. Ewan Morris claims that sport 'provides an interesting test case of willingness to compromise on matters of symbolism in the interests of Irish unity'.¹⁰¹ Some were more successful in this than others.

In hockey, the IHU decided soon after partition for a flag with the crests of the four provinces to be used instead of the tricolour and the playing of the 'Londonderry Air' ('Danny Boy') as the team's anthem.¹⁰² Morris asserts they did so to 'avoid stirring up trouble between nationalists and unionists within their ranks and also wanted to remain on good terms with both the Northern Ireland and Free State governments'.¹⁰³ The use of 'neutral' symbols was not without its critics. Some in the Irish Free State, including Senator Oliver St John Gogarty, complained of the Irish tricolour not being used for Davis Cup ties in tennis matches involving the Irish team. The ILTA responded that 'if the Tricolour were flown some difficulty might be presented if there were players from the Six Counties'.¹⁰⁴ Gogarty also complained about 'the Royal Dublin Society (RDS)'s failure to display the tricolour at the Dublin Horse Show'. Perhaps 'as a result of Gogarty's stirring, the government put pressure on the RDS, and the tricolour appeared for the first time at the 1926 Horse Show'.¹⁰⁵

The choice of flag also caused some controversy in the IRFU. At its annual meeting of 1925, the IRFU voted to have a specially designed Union flag flown at Lansdowne Road because 'the Union governed the game all over Ireland'.¹⁰⁶ The Rugby Union flag was not flown at internationals held in Ravenhill. The Union Jack remained the home flag for those matches. The decision of the IRFU not to fly the Irish tricolour at Lansdowne Road met with severe criticism from many quarters. The *Gaelic Athlete* condemned the IRFU's 'antipathy to the country' through their 'unanimous repudiation of the National flag'.¹⁰⁷ In Dáil Éireann, TD Richard Walsh criticised the IRFU for designing 'a bastard flag before they would agree to recognise the national flag'.¹⁰⁸ The IRFU initially refused to alter its position, eventually compelled to do so after an intervention by the Irish Free State government. The Minister for External Affairs Patrick McGilligan sent a letter to the secretary of the IRFU in 1932 recognising that the IRFU was 'not an exclusively Irish Free State institution', but he could not 'see why the international practice of flying the flag of the country in which international matches are played should not be followed at Lansdowne Road'. He advised the union to fly the 'National flag on the principal flagstaff at Lansdowne Road' at the

upcoming international match against England.¹⁰⁹ It resulted in the IRFU, at its next meeting, deciding to fly the tricolour alongside the Rugby Union flag at all international matches at Lansdowne Road.

The GAA, as a pan-nationalist body, had no hesitation in flying the tricolour at its events. Wishing to display the tricolour at all matches in the 32 counties, the GAA took the pragmatic approach, though, that in Northern Ireland 'the tricolour should not be displayed when it might lead to a breach of the peace, and that no team would be compelled to display the flag'.¹¹⁰ When needed, the GAA could display flexibility and 'common sense' on matters of ideology.

The soccer split actually gave the FAI/FAIFS, as a sporting body based solely in the Irish Free State, more scope 'to portray an outward nationalism without offending the sensibilities of an internal unionist element'. Its international team played an important role in displaying the tricolour internationally during the early years of the Irish Free State, with Dublin's Lord Mayor Alfie Byrne, asserting that the Irish soccer team had enabled 'Continental countries for the first time to see the colour of the flag'.¹¹¹ Likewise, the athletics body, the NACAI, used the tricolour at international events. Pat O'Callaghan who won gold in the hammer event at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics proudly declared, 'I am glad of my victory, not of the victory itself, but for the fact that the world has been shown that Ireland has a flag, that Ireland has a national anthem, and in fact that we have a nationality'.¹¹²

Issues such as headquarters for governing bodies, venues for events and meetings as well as the areas of sporting activity all took on added significance with the creation of a border. With sports like horse racing, the geographic dimension of partition made it prohibitive to divide along political lines as there were just two racecourses based in the six counties, at Down Royal and Downpatrick, making it difficult for the sport to survive as an entity solely in Northern Ireland.¹¹³

Even though the GAA was vehemently opposed to partition, it appeared to favour Ulster counties not in the six counties of Northern Ireland. Monaghan and Cavan venues dominated the hosting of major Ulster championship ties based on the belief that they would draw bigger crowds. Only three Ulster senior football finals took place in the six counties from 1921 to 1945. This was reflected on the field with Monaghan and Cavan completing dominating there also.¹¹⁴ Cavan alone won seven Ulster senior football

championship titles in the 1920s, eight in the 1930s and nine in 1940s.¹¹⁵ The Free State government caused a problem for the GAA when in 1923 it introduced a customs barrier at the border. The imposition of a customs border and security posts created problems for GAA clubs such as Crossmaglen Rangers in South Armagh, cutting the club from its natural hinterland of places such as Dundalk and Castleblaney, south of the border.¹¹⁶ In this instance, living 'across two states carried the potential for disjuncture'.¹¹⁷

A sport that, like soccer, was governed from Belfast was bowls. The IBA, from its foundation in 1904, also similar to the IFA, was dominated by clubs from Belfast. From a governance perspective, the IBA has many striking similarities to the IFA. The modern version of the sport was introduced to Belfast through Scottish immigrants.¹¹⁸ The game was initially dominated by clubs from Belfast and its surrounding environs. The IBA was formed by six clubs from the north-east in Belfast in 1904. The first Dublin club to affiliate was Kenilworth from Rathmines in 1906.¹¹⁹ Such was the dominance of Belfast, that according to the IBA Constitution and Rules booklet from 1914, it was stipulated that 'Matches between Dublin and Clubs outside Belfast shall be played on Saturday in Belfast...The final shall be played in Belfast on the last Saturday in August, on a neutral green to be selected by the IBA Committee'.¹²⁰ Although the governance structures were similar, there were clear differences on the identity of those who were involved in bowls compared to those involved in soccer. Bowls, like rugby, cricket and hockey tended to be dominated by upper-middle class Protestants, sharing the same identity throughout Ireland.

Despite the attempts of the IBA to grow the game in the south, by the late 1920s Belfast clubs still dominated the sport. The IBA Senior Cup was only first won by a team outside of Ulster in 1961, when the Leinster club from Dublin won the competition.¹²¹ Of the 33 clubs affiliated to the IBA in 1929, 27 were from Belfast, four from rural Ulster and the remaining two from Dublin.¹²² The IBA committees were also dominated by members from Belfast, with John Rowland being the first member from the Irish Free State to be appointed to the International Selection Committee in 1932.¹²³ All of the annual and committee meetings were also held in Belfast. Dublin's request to host an international match in 1925 was turned down by the IBA as three quarters of the team were from Ulster.¹²⁴ Whilst the issues relating to geography were decisive in leading to division in soccer, areas outside of Belfast were too underdeveloped to consider seceding in bowls.

Hockey clubs were well spread out geographically throughout the island. In 1921, there were 14 affiliated clubs from Ulster, 11 from Munster, 16 from Leinster and seven from Connaught.¹²⁵ Although hockey remained united, there were objections from the Ulster Ladies' Hockey Union of the lack of inter-provincial and international matches being held in Belfast.¹²⁶ At a dinner organised by the Ulster branch of the IHU in 1925, committee member A.G. Burney acknowledged that Ulster's relationship had improved considerably with the IHU since the early days when 'Dublin forgot there were any provinces outside Leinster, and when Ulster wanted anything they found it very difficult to get, because they were out-voted'.¹²⁷ That season Belfast hosted the international senior men's match against England for the first time and an Ulsterman, R.A. Burke, held the position of IHU president, the second Ulsterman to do so.¹²⁸

Issues over geography and identity show, as with internal governance, that whilst sports did not have to follow political partition with their own partition, they had to, like soccer, acknowledge the existence of the Irish border. The examples of sports adopting neutral symbols and using alternate venues demonstrate how 'the politics and symbolism of partition' are intertwined with 'people's responses to them'.¹²⁹ Sporting organisations, through their decisions of huge symbolic importance on flags and venues, were forced to make hard decisions on the creation of the Irish border, decisions that proved controversial within many sports.

Conclusion

Sport's reaction to partition demonstrates that the political partition of Ireland was not followed by a social and cultural partition. By examining the 'lived experience' of sports bodies at the time, it is clear that people interpreted partition in a myriad of different ways. Although required to be mindful of the new political realities on the island, most sports were neither compelled to nor desired to split along political lines. Some sporting bodies were comprised of members who held the anomalous position of supporting political partition on the one hand and supporting unity in Irish sport on the other, including within soccer. Soccer was no different to other sports in that it was not compelled to split along political lines. It chose to split, primarily for different reasons than the political partition of Ireland, as previously explained. The sporting example also shows that 'ambiguity, fluidity, and uncertainty' were common features of the Irish border, 'a fact that runs counter to the

assumption that borders neatly divide one group, with one set of experiences, from another, with quite different experiences'.¹³⁰ This 'ambiguity, fluidity, and uncertainty' provoked many responses from sporting bodies, the most common one being to remain governed on an all-Ireland basis in post-partition Ireland, thus showing that the soccer split was atypical.

Considering that most sports were not forced to follow the partition of Ireland with their own partition, it is natural that other factors, such as internal politics, were reasons for maintaining unity within those sports, or not. Sports that remained governed on an all-Ireland basis adapted to partition by incorporating inoffensive and neutral flags, anthems and emblems, tailored to accommodate diverse political and cultural interests. They made those decisions, primarily in pursuit of their own 'local interests'.¹³¹ They democratised internal governance structures to limit the scope for divisions and were mindful of the geographic dimensions within their organisations. A federalist approach to internal governance was the clearest path to internal unity. The differences with the internal governance structures of soccer up to the split in 1921 are striking. The way in which sports that remained governed on an all-Ireland basis dealt with matters of an internal governance nature, provides further evidence that the Irish soccer split was caused primarily by deep rooted internal political factors and not the political partition of Ireland. Partition introduced practical difficulties for 32-county bodies, though, such as the GAA, with clubs on different sides of the border hindered in interacting with each other by the border's physical manifestation. For those sports that remained united, by discarding partition within their own structures, it showed that people and organisations on the ground were not beholden to decisions emanating from the political centre. This provides an example that shows the Irish border became a zone of interaction as much as it was one of division.

Most sports that remained united did not have the identity issues faced by soccer. Sports such as rugby, hockey, cricket, tennis and bowls were primarily the preserve of Protestants or Catholics from the upper classes of society. The GAA, as a pan-nationalist association dominated by Catholics, did little to encourage Protestant and unionist membership. Soccer, like athletics and cycling, had to cater for different religions and classes. This certainly provided challenges in maintaining unity for those sports, and contributed to their ultimate division. On the other hand, sports such as boxing and horse racing were able to incorporate members from multiple backgrounds without dividing,

showing that the division in soccer cannot be readily explained by identity issues alone. The complexities of the multiple Irish identities that exist in Irish society were clearly exhibited in sport too, complexities that do not fit into 'simplistic narrative' categorisations.¹³²

By showing how other sports reacted to partition, it is clear that the division in Irish soccer cannot be readily explained as a consequence of the political partition of Ireland or the multiple identities within soccer. The reality was more complex. The difference in internal governance structures between soccer and other sports provides the most compelling evidence of why most sporting organisations remained all-Ireland bodies and soccer did not.¹³³

Chapter Six – The Effects of Partition on Society (1920-25)

Introduction

To show the impact the political partitioning of Ireland had on soccer, it is important to understand the reaction to partition from different groups at the time, and to compare non-sporting bodies to soccer and other sports by showing how those bodies were affected by partition. This provides context to the soccer split and further evidence on how organisations were shaped by the creation of the Irish border. Decisions from the two political jurisdictions, the nation-states, did not result in reciprocal decisions from many organisations with most bodies being able to make internal decisions in ‘pursuit of local interests’.¹ As John Whyte has observed, most organisations founded before 1921 remained governed on an all-Ireland basis afterwards.² Pre-partition practices continued on as before for ‘common sense’ and pragmatic reasons.

Robert Lynch claims that it is important to examine ‘the way partition was constructed and imagined by Irish people themselves’.³ By examining the way partition impacted on multiple groups on the ground, a more holistic picture emerges of how partition was realised at the time of its birth. Examples are displayed here of what Leary describes as the ‘lived experience of the border, the opportunities and restrictions it produced and the responses it invoked’ which acts as ‘a thread linking...the grand topographies of national and international history...directly to the most seemingly humdrum aspects of people’s lives’.⁴ By adopting this approach, borders and indeed national identities are shown not to be ‘merely imposed from above on a passive populace’ but are often ‘shaped by input from below’.⁵

To illustrate the confusion and uncertainty people and organisations experienced with the partition of Ireland and the complexities of Irish identity and society, emphasis here is placed on the labour movement and on the border’s impact on infrastructure and services. The labour movement is particularly relevant given its similarities to soccer on the island. By showing how a grouping similar in profile to soccer responded to factors such as national politics, internal politics and geography, a clearer picture emerges as to why soccer divided. Examples abound within other areas such as religion, education, legal, charity and trade that reflect the labour movement’s complex response to partition.

The Labour Movement

John Whyte, in 'The Permeability of the United Kingdom – Irish Border – A Preliminary Reconnaissance', claims that the interrelationships of trade unions in Ireland are complicated. Many are all-Ireland or all-archipelago.⁶ This in many ways reflects their history and the complex relationship the labour movement in the UK and Ireland have had with the Irish question and partition in particular.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the trade union movement in Ireland was dominated by large British unions to which some local Irish unions affiliated.⁷ Seventy-five per cent of Irish trade unionists were members of British-based unions by 1900.⁸ Mirroring the identity profile of soccer, attempts at unity within the trade union movement between the two main industrial cities, Belfast and Dublin, and between Catholics and Protestants were hindered by issues relating to sabbatarianism and the backing for nationalist causes and martyrs, but were aided by support for explicitly trade union matters.⁹ Charles McCarthy has written of a time when 'protestant and catholic bands', together with nationalists and unionists wearing 'orange and green rosettes', came out in support of 'striking linenlappers' at a procession in Belfast in 1892, showing that identity issues could be side-lined 'in pursuit of local interests'.¹⁰

An all-Ireland umbrella body, the Irish Trades Union Congress (ITUC), was established by trade unions in Dublin in 1894.¹¹ The ITUC was nationalist in outlook, supported home rule whilst strongly opposing partition. The British labour movement, which had strong links throughout Ireland, also supported home rule and opposed partition. The British Labour Party held its annual conference in Belfast in 1907.¹² At the time of the third home rule crisis from 1912, divisions started to appear more regularly within the trade union movement, particularly in Belfast, again mirroring the soccer experience. Some, like the prominent Belfast-born trade unionist William Walker, were opposed to home rule and believed the Irish labour movement should affiliate to the British labour movement.¹³ Others, like the Scottish-born socialist republican leader James Connolly, were virulently opposed to partition and sought for a link between the 'national and social struggles'.¹⁴ A decision of the ITUC Annual Congress in 1912 to form an Irish Labour Party and to declare independence for Irish trade unionism met with opposition from many quarters, particularly those affiliated to British-based unions.¹⁵ Membership of amalgamated (British) over Irish

based unions was on the wane, though, and by 1914, the majority of unions in attendance at the ITUC Annual Congress were Irish unions.¹⁶

Connolly believed the one circumstance in which his 'vision of the future harmony of the Irish working class would be destroyed...was if Ireland were to be partitioned. Partition would be disastrous, because it would keep alive the national issue at the expense of class questions'.¹⁷ He famously observed that it would mean 'a carnival of reaction both North and South'.¹⁸ He 'had first-hand experience of Belfast politics and its working class as a union organiser there from 1911 to 1913. This experience informed his interpretation of working class divisions in northeast Ulster and their political consequences'.¹⁹ Likewise, trade union leader James Larkin, 'who liked to call himself an Ulsterman, was beside himself with anger at the prospect' of partition.²⁰ The ITUC annual conference in June 1914, with 20 delegates from Ulster and four from Britain in attendance, condemned partition by 84-2 votes with eight delegates unrecorded.²¹ In Belfast, although most workers were unionist in outlook, the majority of the leaders of the labour movement, whilst not nationalist, were fearful of being locked in an Orange state and were opposed to partition. This is yet another example that demonstrates the complexities within Irish identities, complexities that also existed in soccer. Emmet O'Connor states:

Whereas *labour* [workers] was mostly Unionist, and by extension Conservative, *Labour* [activists] was very much a part of the British trade union movement, and that movement supported the Liberals, and later the [British Labour Party] BLP, who in turn were allied intermittently with the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP).²²

As most in Ireland moved away from seeking a home rule solution to one of complete independence from Britain during the First World War, divisions in Labour and the trade unions increased significantly on a geographic north-south basis. The ITUC and Labour Party made a number of decisions that were seen as supportive of Sinn Féin which met with opposition from many quarters in Ulster. The Irish trade union movement played a prominent role in the anti-conscription campaign of 1918 along with Sinn Féin and all of nationalist Ireland in opposition to compulsory conscription to the front, most conspicuously by its organisation of a national strike on 23 April.²³ The Irish Labour Party also decided, after much contentious debate, not to contest the 1918 General Election in order not to complicate the 'national' question, helping to pave the way for the landslide Sinn Féin victory.²⁴ Such actions

alienated Labour and trade union activists in Ulster, increasingly so as sectarian strife started to boil over in the north.

Labour in Belfast ignored the party in the rest of the country and ran four candidates in the 1918 General Election.²⁵ A sign of division within trade unionism in Ireland was demonstrated at the ITUC Annual Congress in Derry when very few of the 220 delegates came from either Derry or Belfast.²⁶ To curb the haemorrhage of members from Ulster, the ITUC Congress suggested that its national executive should consist of three members and the secretary from Dublin, three members from Belfast and two from Cork, showing it as a body was more aware of its internal dynamics than the IFA was at the same time.²⁷ Unlike the IFA, it sought to change its internal governance structures before its disagreements were translated into a full-blown split.

Despite misgivings of being associated with the all-Ireland Labour Party and ITUC, most labour activists in Ulster were firmly opposed to partition. There had been 'solidarity across the sectarian divide...at the beginning of 1919 when engineering and shipyard workers campaigned, unsuccessfully, for a reduction in their working hours'. Whilst the four-week 'strike was unsuccessful', labour activists hoped for a thriving socialist movement in Belfast.²⁸ Three of its four candidates in the 1918 general election 'were Home Rulers, as were the majority of its 22 candidates in the municipal elections of 1920'.²⁹ According to Austen Morgan:

This labourist expression was, among voters, compatible with forms of loyalism (and nationalism in the case of catholics), but social reform was the important issue for the leadership of the labour movement and activists. Belfast labour subscribed, in the main, to Wilsonian [Woodrow] democracy, and, while it never became nationalist or separatist, it was certainly not unionist, the idea of Carson running Ulster being rejected on social and political grounds. These predominantly protestant men (and some women) would have accepted a negotiated solution such as dominion home rule, rejecting the partition which had been inevitable since before the war.³⁰

Unity in Irish labour was fragile, though, with northern members blaming the ITUC for doing little to foster closer co-operation.³¹ Just as the IFA showed little empathy to its southern members, the ITUC showed little appetite to address northern issues. Its 'response to the expulsion of Catholics and left-wing Protestant workers from their jobs in 1920 was embarrassingly feeble'.³² James 'Dungaree' Baird, a labour councillor on Belfast Corporation,

helped to form an Expelled Workers' Relief Committee. When he asked the ITUC and the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) for help, neither was particularly forthcoming.³³ At the Irish Labour Party and ITUC annual meeting in August 1921, held in the Mansion House, Dublin, an address was made by Sinn Féin president Éamon de Valera. He remarked 'were it not for the solidarity of Labour behind the national cause in Ireland...the Irish cause would not be where it was that day'.³⁴ The ITUC adopted an anti-partition manifesto at that meeting too.³⁵ The *Belfast Newsletter* declared that those actions 'emphasised the complete subservience of the Labour party in Ireland to Sinn Féin'.³⁶

The Labour movement's association with Sinn Féin was used against the Belfast labour candidates by unionists, when they ran as independents in the 1921 election to the Northern Ireland parliament.³⁷ Edward Carson integrated the Ulster Unionist Labour Association (UULA), a pressure group, uniting trade unionists within a wider unionist movement established in 1918, 'into the Unionist political machine after the war in an attempt to spike the guns of Labour'. It 'began to work closely with the fiercely Loyalist ex-servicemen's associations in focussing Protestant workers' attentions on what they saw as the exigencies of the National Question'. Labour 'representatives were ousted from top positions in trade unions and were replaced by Loyalists. What seemed to be the nascent development of class politics in Belfast relapsed into a familiar tribal pattern'.³⁸ The Northern labour candidates were anti-partitionist, but for socialist rather than nationalist reasons.³⁹ Their message was lost by the sectarian nature of the election, and once loyalists prevented them from holding an election rally in the Ulster Hall, they folded their campaign.⁴⁰ All labour candidates performed disastrously, all losing their deposits.⁴¹ Three of the four candidates – John Hanna, James Baird and Harry Midgley – 'were Protestants and thus all the more reprehensible in the eyes of those Loyalists to whom they were the archetypal "Lundies" [traitors]'.⁴² By 1921, with the north engulfed in sectarian violence, there was no platform for a socialist voice at the 'Partition Election'. It was a case of what Lynch describes as 'losers', in this instance Protestant socialists, who 'fell by the wayside in the rush to narrow Irish identity to a simple for or against duality'.⁴³

The Irish labour movement, like the Irish soccer community, was not a homogenous group. With many Protestants and Catholics, unionists and nationalists, as well as socialist internationalists, a delicate juggling act was required within the political party and the trade unions after the onset of partition. The labour movement in the north sought to avoid

contention and remain united by focusing on labour and trade union issues, on wages and conditions for workers. Charles McCarthy believed the labour movement in the north was held together by:

the unifying force of socialism, with its uncompromising international ethic, which seemed to be so strong an influence on many of the trade union leaders down through the years, despite the fact that very many of the rank and file members were not only indifferent to such ideas but were often hostile to them.⁴⁴

O'Connor contends that:

clinging to core interests has enabled a united, secular Labour movement to function in a confessional society among the very people most divided by sectarianism. Historically, keeping contention out of the unions was in turn made possible by the marginality of nationalism, the self-exclusion of Unionists – as distinct from Protestants – and their management by a self-selecting elite, committed to Labourist values. In fact unions were less concerned about divisions between Catholics and Protestants than the antagonism between Labourism and Unionism. With a mainly Protestant, anti-Unionist leadership and a mainly Protestant, Unionist membership, mutually dependent for their bread and butter, but otherwise at odds, they found themselves walking a tight line between their organisational interests and the politics of their members.⁴⁵

Some involved in the Belfast Labour party, like William McMullen, sought to move further away from the British Labour Party, whilst others such as Sam Kyle, Hugh Gemmell and Harry Midgley, 'concentrated on supplying a non-sectarian opposition to the governing unionists with British Labour as their model and ideological base'.⁴⁶ The issues of social reform, what Sahlins describes as 'the pursuit of local interests', kept them united.⁴⁷ With such divergent views on partition, members avoided the topic as often as possible. When Harry Midgley ran in the Westminster election in 1923 in West Belfast, he tried to appeal to unionists and nationalists by being duplicitous on the issue of partition. On 'the Shankill Road he stressed his Protestantism and his army service in the Great War, while in the Falls he hit out against the internment of prisoners and appeared to share the aspirations of his audience to a United Ireland'.⁴⁸ Whilst many of their members were unionists, most of the leaders of Belfast labour were anti-partitionist. They did not give any credibility to the Northern regime.⁴⁹ One of the first signs of the labour movement viewing the Northern Ireland entity as a reality was the decision of the Belfast party to organise itself on a six county basis in 1924, as the Northern Ireland Labour Party

(NILP).⁵⁰ Although independent, it modelled itself on British Labour and was closely linked with the Irish Labour Party 'by virtue of a number of trade unions and other organisations being affiliated to the ITUC of which the Irish Labour Party was part'.⁵¹ Whilst technically it was a breakaway from the Irish Labour Party and ITUC, covertly, Congress officers may have nodded their approval. Luke Duffy and Thomas Johnson, chairman and secretary of the ITUC, visited Belfast in February 1924 and discussed the creation of a party for the six counties.⁵² The NILP was able to cross the sectarian divide, garnering support from Protestants and Catholics. With 'Devlinite nationalism hesitant about practising minority politics, and republicanism even more disorientated', the NILP was seen as an appealing political option for many nationalists.⁵³

The ITUC remained an all-Ireland body, primarily because there was no feasible alternative in the north and there was little interest in forming an Ulster TUC.⁵⁴ This mirrors sports such as bowls and horse racing, where areas far-removed from their headquarters were too underdeveloped for secession to be a viable option. British trade unions 'with a substantial cross-border membership continued to locate their Irish offices in Dublin, and Loyalist aggression made officialdom more inclined to maintain lifelines to London and Dublin'.⁵⁵ William O'Brien, general secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) emphasised in 1925 'the fact that the working class in Ireland recognises no political or geographical border. Partition...prevails almost exclusively in the political sphere'.⁵⁶ This is another clear example where actions from the political centre did not lead to parallel actions on the ground. It also is further evidence of the view of Leary that, 'Pre-partition practices, and all kinds of social and cultural connections...continued to shape perspectives of what was normal' and that people and organisations 'retained contact with a known, immediate, and familiar reality that reached beyond the boundaries of the state'.⁵⁷ Assistant secretary of the Irish Labour Party and TUC R.J.P. Mortished, speaking in 1926, claimed:

The existence of an All-Ireland Labour organisation, holding annual Congresses attended by delegates from all parts of the country, without distinction, and represented by a National Executive which included citizens of Belfast and Derry, as well as Dublin and Cork, is the surest existing sign that the present political partition of Ireland is not inevitably final.⁵⁸

The NILP affiliated to the ITUC in 1927 and formed a joint council with the Irish Labour Party in 1930. Emmet O'Connor contends that 'meetings were few and discussions confined to general exchange of views', though.⁵⁹ The labour movement in the north moved from a position of fervent to nominal opposition to partition as the northern jurisdiction's security became more assured.⁶⁰ Midgley gained more power in the 1930s within the movement and also veered more towards a unionist stance.⁶¹ The *Belfast Newsletter*, in an editorial written in 1934, highlighted the primary dilemma facing the NILP. It had to decide whether to work towards 'an Ulster "partitioned" from the Free State or "partitioned" from the United Kingdom'.⁶² Until it stopped avoiding this key issue in such a divided society, it would remain weak politically. The increased unionism within the labour movement in the north led to ruptures with the movement in the Irish Free State who broke off relations with the NILP during the late 1930s.⁶³

The ITUC was committed to retaining its all-Ireland structures. Recognising that its trade unions and members based in Northern Ireland needed to be treated differently, a Northern Ireland committee of the ITUC was established to speak 'for all trade unions in the north and all trade unionists'.⁶⁴ The primacy of internal politics can be seen here. Acknowledging that the Northern Ireland government was likely to be hostile to the northern committee of what it saw as a Free State organisation, the ITUC granted the northern committee a large degree of autonomy. Local representatives chaired conferences in Belfast, instead of the ITUC president; the northern committee was able to hire a full-time officer with an office; and the northern committee was given the authority to make appointments to Northern Ireland government boards.⁶⁵ According to Francis Devine and Emmet O'Connor, 'while it remained technically a sub-committee "empowered to act for the National Executive in matters peculiar to the Six County area", the NIC gradually assumed a de facto autonomy'.⁶⁶

The partitioning of Ireland posed similar problems for the main trade unions in education, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI), as it did for most trade unions that straddled both new jurisdictions. Both INTO and ASTI to this day are run on an all-Ireland basis, despite education being administered separately in each jurisdiction. The most

serious breach in the unity of INTO took place in 1918-1919, when four northern branches withdrew from the organisation, followed by a new body called the Ulster Teachers' Union, composed of Protestant teachers being established. The 'withdrawal was inspired entirely by political motives'.⁶⁷ The main reasons they cited were INTO's affiliation to the ITUC, that body's recommendation to withdraw Labour candidates for the 1918 General Elections to favour Sinn Féin candidates, and INTO's participation in the one-day anti-conscription strike of April 1918.⁶⁸ Four branches - Coleraine, Lisburn, Londonderry and Newtownards - severed their connections with INTO in 1919 and took steps to establish the Ulster Teachers' Union. All the Catholic teachers and a substantial number of the Protestant teachers in the area remained loyal to INTO, though.⁶⁹ According to Thomas J. O'Connell who wrote a history of INTO in its centenary year in 1968:

For a number of years strained relations existed between the Union and the INTO...As the years went by a spirit of co-operation gradually grew up; old rivalries were forgotten and both bodies now co-operate in matters of common interest. Since 1920, eight members from branches in Northern Ireland, four of whom were Protestants, have been unanimously elected as President of the INTO.⁷⁰

To retain its all-Ireland structures, INTO realised, just like the ITUC and many other 32-county bodies, it needed to offer its northern members a large degree of 'home rule'. Once Northern Ireland was established, INTO formed a northern committee to:

Manage its special affairs in Northern Ireland. It has its own official journal and holds annual conferences to which the President and other members of the Executive and Finance Committee are invited. Subscriptions and other fees are sent to Head Office as in the case of all INTO branches, and payments of benefits as well as the expenses of the administration in Northern Ireland are paid from the general funds of the INTO.⁷¹

The teachers' unions desired to retain their all-Ireland structure after partition and made a concerted effort to accommodate their members based in the new jurisdiction of Northern Ireland, mirroring the tactics of other trade unions and the ITUC. The labour movement was faced with many challenges when the country was partitioned. The movement, like soccer, included a divergent group of people who had to operate under enormous sectarian and political pressures, demonstrating the complexities of Irish identities. Partial union was achieved, particularly within trade unionism, by clinging to core interests within the movement and by offering a large

degree of autonomy to northern labour activists, recognising the vastly different circumstances they operated under. The labour example shows that decisions ‘emanating from the political centre’ were not always reflected on daily lives as felt ‘from below’.⁷² The labour movement also responded differently to division within its ranks than soccer authorities in Ireland did. Whilst both the labour movement and soccer administrators faced many of the same dilemmas relating to the national political environment, geographic and identity issues, the labour movement changed its internal governance structures in order to remain united. The IFA only sought to change its internal governance structures once the LFA had seceded. By that stage it was too late.

Infrastructure and Services

By drawing a line and creating a physical border spanning almost 300 miles, some of the most challenging issues faced by both jurisdictions after partition related to infrastructure and service-based issues. Even after 1925, when many believed the border area was settled, concerns relating to the railway infrastructure, the territorial ownership of bodies of water, and the postal services demonstrated the uncertain and confusing nature of partition. Anderson and Bort’s assertion that ‘if religion and culture partition Ireland into two territories, the dividing line does not coincide with the Border’ holds true in the ways the border was physically experienced by those closest to it.⁷³ For infrastructure and services such as railways, rivers, electricity and postal services, the border showed that the reality of partition ‘was more complex, that national allegiances could be ambivalent, weak, trumped by other loyalties, and reflexively adjustable depending on circumstances’. The border was as much a zone of ‘interaction’ as it was ‘of demarcation and division’.⁷⁴ The impact the creation of the Irish border had on infrastructure and services demonstrates the complexities and fluidity of partition, and helps to explain why there were so many different responses to partition from multiple organisations, including from those involved in soccer.

The complexity of the railway infrastructure and ownership within Ireland was compounded dramatically by the creation of a border. Five railway companies were directly affected by the new border by serving both sides of it; the Great Northern; the County Donegal; the Londonderry, Lough Swilly & Letterkenny; the Sligo, Leitrim & Northern Counties; and the Dundalk, Newry and Greenore Railways.⁷⁵ This was further exacerbated

by the Free State's decision to impose a customs barrier in 1923 (see p. 50). Under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, the railways were a reserved service to be treated as an all-Ireland concern to come under the control of the Council of Ireland once it was established between the northern and southern jurisdictions. With the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 superseding the Government Ireland of Act 1920 for the 26 counties, railways remained a reserved service in Northern Ireland. This meant the Free State government could legislate on railways within its jurisdiction but the northern government could not for its area. All railway legislation affecting the north must come before the Imperial parliament in Westminster. In 1923, when the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway Bill came before Westminster, the parliament deemed it unpassable as that railway company operated on both sides of the border and the Imperial parliament could not legislate for the Free State territory.⁷⁶ The northern government was happy 'to leave this matter entirely to the Imperial Members in view of the awkward precedents which might be originated'.⁷⁷ Relationships between both Irish governments only complicated matters further. The Free State government, intrinsically opposed to partition, sought unification of the railway companies, whilst the northern government, looking to assert its independence from Dublin in every feasible way, wanted the Free State government to have no say nor control of any railway issue within its jurisdiction.⁷⁸

The Free State government initially hoped the railways would group together, and if not, it would bring in legislation to unify the railways. The biggest dilemma was caused by the railway companies that straddled both sides of the border, particularly the Great Northern Railway, which had one third of its lines in the Free State and 50 per cent of its shareholders registered in the south.⁷⁹ The border area was uncertain too up until the Boundary Commission decision of 1925. Whilst the Free State's preferred option was for a unified railway service throughout Ireland, the northern government looked at the possibility of amalgamating the railway companies in Northern Ireland with British railway companies.⁸⁰ Craig and Cosgrave met in July 1923, with government conferences continuing on into 1924, where they agreed that the Free State would legislate for railway companies based solely in the Free State territory and the northern government would not look to amalgamate railway companies in Northern Ireland with British ones.⁸¹ This practice continued up until the 1950s when, in one of the few occasions of cross-border cooperation,

both governments agreed to purchase the Great Northern Railway in 1951, to be run by a joint board nominated by the two governments.⁸²

At the onset of partition, the most vigorous challenge to the railway industry came from a large increase in the use of roads by motor vehicles. After partition, responsibility for roads and bridges (except railway bridges in the case of Northern Ireland) were transferred to both Irish jurisdictions. The border, and particularly the introduction of customs barriers, posed problems for motor users. The Revenue Commissioners in Dublin, declared that on and after the imposition of the customs barrier on 1 April 1923, 'motor cars which have been manufactured in Great Britain will be subject, when imported into the Free State, to an *ad valorem* duty of 33 1/3 per cent'.⁸³ The north experienced higher petrol costs than England and Scotland as supplies of petrol were no longer received from Dublin, and therefore, petrol had to be imported.⁸⁴ For motorists, approved roads could only be used to cross the border, from 1923. People travelling from Dundalk in Louth to Forkhill in Armagh were no longer able to travel the direct route of four miles, due to the absence of an approved road, and had to make a journey of twelve miles instead.⁸⁵ Leary has also highlighted the difficulties in accessing 'goods and services available just a short distance away meant either accepting customs charges or travelling to another town'.⁸⁶ Initially, cars were unable to cross the border on Sundays or public holidays. Both governments agreed to remove this impediment for tourists in the fear of hampering that industry.⁸⁷ Signposts had to be erected by customs officials directing motorists to customs stations due to the complicated nature of the customs process.⁸⁸ There was some co-operation between both jurisdictions on road and motors issues, such as allowing motorists to use one driving license in both entities.⁸⁹ The experience of motor users traversing the newly created border showed the arbitrary and confused way it was implemented.

Cross-border cooperation was harder won on the issue of fishing rights on Lough and River Foyle. Disputes over fishing on the Foyle spanned for three decades after partition, demonstrating the uncertain nature of the border, the local problems it caused, and the actual remit of its physical territory. It also showed the haphazard way in which the border was drawn up. No boundary was delimited at any point for either Lough Foyle or Lough Carlingford.⁹⁰ Nobody knew where the border line was, on various waterways straddling the borders as a result. Sahllins talks about a three-stage process in creating a boundary; allocation, delimitation and demarcation. In his case study of the Pyrenean boundary

between France and Spain, he claims that the borderline was originally allocated under the Treaty of Pyrenees in 1659 but not delimited or demarcated until the Treaties of Bayonne 1866-68. As a result, the Pyrenean border between France and Spain remained undefined and contested for the intervening two centuries.⁹¹ Similarly, the boundary at Loughs Foyle and Carlingford remained contested. The issue was further complicated by the different constitutional positions of both jurisdictions. The northern and southern jurisdictions were both to remain within the United Kingdom under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, whereby the issue of territorial waters would not have arisen. However, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 'afforded enhanced "dominion" status to all of Ireland – outside the United Kingdom, albeit within the British Empire. Authority having passed to Dublin, the Treaty then allowed for Northern Ireland, as defined by the previous Act, to opt out, thus returning to its original standing'.⁹² Northern Ireland opted out of the Free State. However, under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, its jurisdiction was for the boroughs of Belfast and Derry and for the parliamentary counties of Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone, and not for any territorial waters, which the Free State government argued was part of its territory as a dominion.⁹³ Conversely, the northern government claimed to the Imperial government 'that the whole of the deep waters of Lough Foyle fell within the territorial waters of Northern Ireland'.⁹⁴

The Free State government's argument was the main defence used in a court case in Belfast in 1923 by a steamship company summonsed when one of its steamers, the *Greyhound* was accused by the northern government of selling liquor on Sundays in Belfast Lough, in contravention of a Sunday Closing Act disallowing the sale of alcohol on Sundays it passed.⁹⁵ The defence ascertained that, as the alcohol was sold on Belfast Lough, and that as all territorial waters of Ireland belonged to the Free State, Northern Ireland had no jurisdiction over the Lough. The prosecution refuted this claim, arguing that the northern parliament had powers to deal with 'lighthouses, buoys and beacons in Belfast Harbour', it, therefore, had jurisdiction over Belfast Lough.⁹⁶ The steamship company lost the case and was fined £2.97. The ruling against the steamship company did not refer to the rights over territorial waters, though. Questions remained unanswered and posed, including by the *Irish News* who pondered 'Are the Northern Government justified in trespassing on Irish ocean waters to the extent of keeping the Prison Ship *Argenta* moored within 3 miles of Larne?'⁹⁸

The dispute remained unresolved, partly because no jurisdiction was prepared to deal with the thorny territorial ramifications. The British government simply said 'that it was not in a position to express a view'.⁹⁹ The Dublin government considered submitting the issue to the Court of International Justice at the Hague but demurred in the end, leading the *Sligo Champion* to ask, 'Is the Saorstat [Free State] a Nation?'¹⁰⁰ Due to territorial uncertainty surrounding Lough Foyle, neither jurisdiction could enforce different rulings made in their jurisdictions on fishing rights. According to Peter Leary, 'Attitudes to the Foyle dispute did not, however, fold neatly along the lines of religious denomination or pre-partition politics'.¹⁰¹ Fishermen disputing Northern Ireland's claim to territorial waters in Lough Foyle, included Catholics, Presbyterians and Church of Ireland members, some who signed the Ulster Covenant in 1912 opposing home rule.¹⁰² The attorney-generals from both jurisdictions worked quietly in the background for some time to reach an agreement the two governments were eager to reach. Finally, in 1950 both governments agreed to set up a joint authority to regulate and conserve the fisheries for the Foyle region.¹⁰³ It was the first cross-border body with decision making powers, brought about, not because of an initiative led by either government, but by a determined campaign by fishermen who 'seized the opportunity presented by partition to reassert their claim to fishing rights', another example of local interests trumping identity issues.¹⁰⁴ Whilst many of the issues relating to railways, roads and fisheries may not have directly impacted upon soccer authorities to any great measure, the confusion and complexities that partition wrought on those areas undoubtedly affected how soccer administrators' responded to the partition of Ireland, as with other organisations.

The northern government also was concerned over the control of lighthouses, including on Lough Foyle.¹⁰⁵ Under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, lighthouses, buoys and beacons were listed as reserved services.¹⁰⁶ After partition, lighthouses continued to be administered by the Irish Lighthouses Commissioners in Dublin, something that irritated the northern government. Hugh Pollock, the northern finance minister 'demanded that reserved services administered in the six counties should not be carried out from Dublin', insisting that the 'Belfast Harbour Commission...already has some experience of lighthouse supervision'.¹⁰⁷ The northern administration, eager to have as little to do with the south as possible, sought to assert its independence at every opportunity. When the British government proposed to create a new Irish Office to deal with both Irish jurisdictions, the

northern government strenuously objected and insisted that the Free State should remain under the remit of the Colonial Office with the north remaining a responsibility of the Home Office.¹⁰⁸ On the administration of lighthouses, the northern cabinet suggested that 'the Belfast Harbour Commission should take over the management of the Lighthouses in Northern Ireland' and resolved to 'get into touch with the Londonderry – and Newry – Harbour Authorities securing their acquiescence'. Once that failed, the government proposed that the Scottish Lighthouse Authorities should take over the management of lighthouses for Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁹ Later, the northern government suggested that Trinity House in London should administer lighthouses for the north instead.¹¹⁰ With all efforts failing, the northern administration had to concede to the *status quo*, with the Irish Lights Commissioners remaining the body that administered lighthouses for the whole island.¹¹¹ Later, the Free State government had an issue with maintaining lighthouses in the north, though, as it wanted financial aid from the British government to do so.¹¹² The administration of lighthouses showed, in the words of Leary, that 'in practice the cut would never be complete'.¹¹³

Arguably, the best example of cooperation between north and south on a governmental level occurred with the Erne Hydro-Electric scheme in the 1940s and 1950s. There was some level of co-operation between both administrations from the onset of partition 'in the operation of the sluice system which controlled the water levels in Upper and Lower Lough Erne'.¹¹⁴ The Erne river and lakes catchment area is 1,560 square miles, 830 in the South, the other 730 in the North.¹¹⁵ North-south 'co-operation on drainage was...institutionalised in the form of a Lough and River Erne Drainage District, constituted in 1863, managed by a drainage board annually, and operating four sluices, two in the North and two in the South'.¹¹⁶

The Electricity Supply Board (ESB), the electricity provider for the south, planned a major project to harness the power of the Erne waters to generate electricity. To optimise the Erne's potential to generate electricity, it needed the cooperation of the northern government. From 1938, the ESB started official and unofficial communications with the Belfast government.¹¹⁷ The ESB project offered significant attractions to the administrations on both sides of the border; electricity for the south, and drainage of the Erne catchment area for the north.¹¹⁸ The southern government was fully behind the scheme, with two of its ministers, Seán McEntee and Seán Lemass, publicly citing the benefits to both

jurisdictions.¹¹⁹ Regardless of the obvious benefits to the northern government, it took many years before an agreement was reached between both jurisdictions. The northern administration pursued a policy of non-cooperation with the southern government for political reasons.¹²⁰ According to Michael Kennedy, 'ESB planning began on the Erne scheme in 1942, but the first cross-border (government) contacts were not made until 1943. Not until early 1946 did Belfast agree to allow the dredging by the ESB to take place within Northern Irish territory'.¹²¹ Another hurdle had to be overcome. Under the Government of Ireland Act 1920, Northern Ireland could only engage in projects solely within its jurisdiction. Amending legislation was needed from Westminster to allow the northern government to cooperate with the south on the Erne project.¹²² There were deep division within the northern cabinet. It took the influence of the prime minister Sir Basil Brooke, whose constituency in Fermanagh stood to benefit greatly from the drainage of the Erne, to get the cabinet to agree on the scheme.¹²³ Brooke succeeded and the ESB Erne's scheme was allowed to proceed 'in a spirit of co-operation and goodwill on all sides'.¹²⁴ The Erne Hydro-Electric Scheme showed that the north and south could work together on cross-border issues. They could agree on issues relating to the land both jurisdictions shared. It also showed, even with such an obvious mutually beneficial scheme, that it still took years before the bad faith that had endured for decades, was overcome.

The postal services were, like the railways, a reserved service under the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Again, with the Anglo-Irish Treaty overriding the Government of Ireland Act 1920 for the 26 counties, the Irish Free State took control of its postal services whilst the Imperial parliament in Westminster retained control of the postal services for Northern Ireland. This fact, and the nature of mail routes and post offices caused many problems as partition set in. The northern government found it very hard to assert its independence from the rest of Ireland on the issue of postal services. Its dependence on cooperating with the Free State included; residents in border areas in the north being reliant on Free State post offices to deliver their mail; sensitive mail for security forces being routed through Free State post offices; and mail from Britain being delivered via the Holyhead-Kingstown (renamed Dún Laoghaire after 1922, located in County Dublin) route to different locales in Northern Ireland.

In 1923, an RUC officer commanding in Urney in County Tyrone complained that official letters for his platoon were being sent via Strabane to Clady station in the Free State

(County Donegal), 'from thence they are brought to Clady Village, which is in Northern Territory, a distance of about a quarter of a mile'.¹²⁵ He suggested that the platoon should receive its mail from Sion Mills post office 'and avoid the danger of tampering with any official letters in the Free State'.¹²⁶ The cost to change the delivery post office from Clady Station to Sion Mills was estimated at £27. The government, therefore, decided to have a messenger from the camp to collect the RUC's post from Sion Mills instead at a cost of £1.10.0 per annum.¹²⁷

To complicate the confusion over mail routes and the jurisdictional remit of post offices, was the inability of the northern government to make any decisions on postal services. All such decisions were required to be made by the Postmaster General in London. The postal, railway and fishing examples show the practical implications of the way Ged Martin describes that partition 'created not two, but one-and-a-half Irelands, in which the North East would not move to full independence from Britain but never achieved entire equality within the United Kingdom'.¹²⁸ The northern government established a function within its ministry of Commerce to make representations to the British Postmaster General.¹²⁹ The majority of residents of Belcoo in County Fermanagh petitioned the ministry of Commerce for a post office in Belcoo in late 1922. The town had been served by the Blacklion post office in County Cavan in the Free State up to that point. The ministry of Commerce informed them that the ministry could not make any decisions on postal services, the petition would have to be sent to the Postmaster General in London.¹³⁰ The Belcoo residents sought their own post office as it was inconvenient to receive their mail from Blacklion; they were liable to pay the higher postage charges in force in the Free State; and the safety concerns caused by many incidents of civil disturbances that had occurred in Blacklion for much of 1922.¹³¹ In May 1923, the northern government informed the Belcoo residents that their petition was successful and they would be granted a post office.¹³²

The Belcoo post office opened. However, 'the arrangement in force necessitates the conveyance of letters posted in the Belcoo Office to Blacklion for sorting and despatch from Belcoo Railway Station by an official attached to the Blacklion Office' which 'neutralizes in a considerable degree the advantages expected by the Belcoo residents from the establishment of a separate Post Office there'.¹³³ The residents requested that either the 'sorting and despatch of outgoing letters should be entrusted to the sub-Postmaster of Belcoo' or to arrange for distribution and collection of letters in the townlands of Creenahor

and Moneyorgan (both in Northern Ireland) 'in that area to be undertaken by postmen of the Imperial Postal Service'.¹³⁴ The government turned down this request for a variety of reasons; the proposed changes at Belcoo would cost £330 per annum to be paid by Northern Ireland; the Boundary Commission had still not decided on the boundary, 'The Post Office is not disposed to take any movement which would suggest an attempt to force a decision on the boundary question'; and the 'Imperial Post Office would have to secure the sanction of the Free State Post Office to make any alterations to Belcoo'.¹³⁵ Once the boundary question was settled in 1925, the northern government was reluctant to halt the arrangement with the Free State postal services that allowed Free State post officers serve some northern areas and vice versa, due to the increased expenditure involved and the loss of an efficient service such a move would entail.¹³⁶

Claire Fitzpatrick has ascertained, in her study on the all-red mail route pursued by Craig's government, that 'gaining control over the post and communications was important for establishing Northern Ireland as distinct from the rest of Ireland while confirming its membership of the United Kingdom. Postal services signified cohesion of the state, a common linking of peoples'.¹³⁷ At one of the first northern government cabinet meetings, Ernest Clark stated that on the issue of postal services 'Northern Ireland should be made a self-contained unit corresponding direct with London, instead of along the present channel through Dublin'.¹³⁸ Up until April 1922, the whole island was served by the Holyhead-Kingstown mail service.¹³⁹ The northern government, through the Postmaster General in London, decided, where possible, to divert all mail destined for Northern Ireland by the Holyhead-Kingstown route to the Stranraer-Larne service instead, foregoing the route through the Free State, in essence creating a red route.¹⁴⁰ The decision came in for much criticism, particularly from areas in the north negatively affected by the move with mail now taking longer to arrive. The *Frontier Sentinel*, based in Newry in County Down, 'argued that it was "extraordinary" that people were prepared to "scrap a service" which has given "every satisfaction and little fault"'.¹⁴¹ Under pressure from the Belfast business community and by the fact that 'the service via Kingstown' ensured 'an arrival in London at 5:45am whereas via Larne and Stranraer the mails did not arrive in London until 7:15am', Craig decided on 1 March 1927, 'for the time being we should agree to the mails being allowed to go via Kingstown and Holyhead'.¹⁴² The dream to circumvent the Irish Free State for mail services continued, with many hoping the use of airships and flying boats from Liverpool

would solve the problem in the future.¹⁴³ The incident demonstrated that practical and financial considerations could still take precedence over politics in the fledgling jurisdiction looking to assert its legitimacy. It is important to note, as Fitzpatrick has, that when 'Northern Ireland as an entity was uncertain the clamour was great, when its status was secure [after the Boundary Commission decision in 1925], the clamour diminished'.¹⁴⁴

The impact of partition on the infrastructure of the island of Ireland and the services that had served it on an all-Ireland basis beforehand, showed the scale of the changes needed to create a border. The confusion and uncertainty that such a cleavage caused was aptly demonstrated by the effects it had on railways, fisheries and postal services. These examples show that Irish 'county boundaries had clearly never been designed to become customs barriers' and that the way partition was constructed made it a 'cruel surgery, even for the victors'.¹⁴⁵ Customs, practices and services had to be changed overnight to accommodate two political jurisdictions instead of one. In some instances, where economic sense prevailed, as with postal routes and the Erne Hydro-Electric scheme, it was possible to achieve co-operation between both entities, eventually. Leary's contention that the 'proximity to the frontier allowed and compelled a degree of movement between the legal, political, ideological, and economic conditions pertaining to each of the two territories' was borne out through the examples of railways, lighthouses, electricity and postal services.¹⁴⁶ The infrastructure and services examples demonstrate some of the sheer complexities involved with the partition of Ireland. It is little wonder that it elicited 'a myriad of reactions, counter-reactions, and interactions' from people and organisations, including from those involved in soccer.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

There was no compunction or obligation for most organisations to follow suit once the new international frontier was created with the partition of Ireland. As Leary comments, 'the Irish border divided legal and political systems but not fundamentally different social models'.¹⁴⁸ Even with the legal partition, unity existed up until 1926 in the bar where all Irish barristers, north or south, had 'the right of Audience in both areas of Ireland preserved to them'.¹⁴⁹ and everyone on the island had to qualify as a barrister through King's Inns in Dublin up until 1925.¹⁵⁰ The example of trade unions remaining all-Ireland bodies was echoed by multiple religious, trade, charity and sporting organisations that maintained a 32-

county presence after partition. With the confusing nature of partition, the uncertainty surrounding its viability as exhibited through issues relating to infrastructure and services, it is little wonder that most organisations remained all-Ireland bodies. The infrastructure and services examples cited confirm Readman, Radding and Bryant's assertion that 'ambiguity, fluidity, and uncertainty were all common to life in borderlands generally'.¹⁵¹ Unionists were happy to remain in a united Ireland, as long as that Ireland remained firmly a part of the union with Britain. This was true for most organisations with a strong unionist and Protestant make-up, including soccer. The IFA never wanted partition within the game and always sought to govern for the whole island.

According to John Whyte, Irish organisations remained all-Ireland entities for a variety of reasons, such as historical inertia, financial reasons, self-interest, and pragmatism.¹⁵² They were allowed to pursue their 'local interests' without becoming subsumed by 'the iron grip of the nation-state'.¹⁵³ William O'Brien, the labour leader, was in many ways correct in 1926 when he claimed 'Partition...prevails almost exclusively in the political sphere'.¹⁵⁴ Even in the political sphere, unionist politicians agreed to maintain all-Ireland functions for lighthouses and postal services for pragmatic reasons. For bodies with a homogenous profile, there was little difficulty in remaining united. For those like soccer and the labour movement, partition highlighted the differences amongst their membership. Numerous organisations had complex identity profiles that do not fit into the simplistic binary one purely between Irish Catholic nationalists and Ulster Protestant unionists. Many with a diverse demographic still remained united by acknowledging the changed circumstances and by introducing new structures to accommodate members based in Northern Ireland. In this instance, again, soccer was different.

In Peter Leary's study of border areas, he speaks of:

Pre-partition practices, and all kinds of social and cultural connections...continued to shape perspectives of what was normal, while opportunism bred new attitudes to border crossing. Border residents retained contact with a known, immediate, and familiar reality that reached beyond the boundaries of the state. Instead of normalizing the performance of formal power, important elements of everyday life and, therefore, 'common sense' remained or emerged increasingly at odds with its strictly delineated structures.¹⁵⁵

This is not just true of border areas or residents. Pre-partition practices continued with most organisations too, regardless of proximity to the border. Whyte observed that 'organisations founded before 1921 tend to continue on their previous all-Ireland or all-archipelago basis

unless something occurs to change them, while organisations founded since 1921 are more likely to observe the border'.¹⁵⁶ For 'common sense' and pragmatic reasons, most organisations, many with complex identity make-ups, chose to maintain their pre-partition governance structures.

That the partition of Ireland contributed to divisions within Irish soccer, there is no doubt. By demonstrating the way most organisations were neither compelled to nor inclined to fragment, it is clear the partition of Ireland did not force soccer in Ireland to split. It was an anomaly that it did. The partition of bodies in Ireland was only common to those with direct links to the northern government; including government departments; statutory bodies for professions like the pharmaceutical industry; and lobbying groups.¹⁵⁷ It was rare for sporting bodies to split, even for sports with diverse demographic make-ups like boxing and horse racing (see Chapter Five). It was indeed rare for any organisation to split on a north-south basis that was formed before 1921. This further highlights the anomalous position of soccer and confirms the primacy of intra-governance issues in maintaining unity, or not, within organisations in post-partition Ireland.

Chapter Seven – International Sporting Divisions (1918-2020)

Introduction

Borders globally, as in Ireland, are fluid and dynamic, and have ‘formed the basis of cultural interactions, exchanges, and admixtures. They have been claimed, defined, and contested by social, ethnic, and national groups, as well as by institutions’.¹ As discussed previously, even politically stable borders such as the Pyrenean border between France and Spain are still alive and contested.² To comprehensively understand the reasons for the Irish soccer split, it is important to place it in its global context. Whilst political divisions, as in Ireland, have impacted on sports, it is necessary to look at divisions beyond the political centre too, to move away from ‘the iron grip of the nation-state’.³ Supra-national entities such as international sporting federations and intra-organisational dynamics are vehicles to foment or decrease division in sporting bodies globally, just as they have been shown to do so in Ireland.

The purpose here is to compare the Irish soccer split to other sporting divisions around the world, not just to provide side-by-side comparisons but to ‘find concrete connections’.⁴ The impact on sporting organisations of the partitions of Germany, Palestine and India are assessed as well as intra-national divisions in countries such as the UK. Paul Rouse claims that ‘sport in Ireland held characteristics shared by no other country’.⁵ This is true to some extent but, as Sugden and Bairner assert, ‘the problems of each society are unique and demand ad hoc responses’.⁶ The factors of national politics, internal politics, geography and international sporting politics, prevalent in causing the Irish soccer split, were also prominent factors with many other sporting divisions globally. Factors such as ethnicity and language, whilst not impactful in the Irish soccer example, were significant causal elements in other jurisdictions. Even though all jurisdictions are unique, it is clear that all borderlands globally are complex, filled with ambiguity, fluidity and uncertainty. Assessing sporting divisions on a transnational basis helps us ‘to understand the complex of multidimensional and multidirectional governmental and societal relationships characteristic of international boundaries and their hinterlands’.⁷

National Politics

A common factor in causing sporting splits throughout the world is the political environment those sports exist in. Once a country has been partitioned, the sporting bodies

in general have also become partitioned. Ireland is quite unique, though, in that most sports such as Gaelic games, boxing, rugby, cricket, bowls, hockey and golf, either remained or became all-Ireland bodies after the partition of Ireland, soccer and athletics being the main exceptions that became divided (see Chapter Five). John Whyte described the pattern in Ireland to ignore the international political frontier as very unique, particularly in Europe. Writing in 1983, Whyte found no parallel in Europe:

Even in the Nordic Union, where cooperation across borders is stronger than in most parts of Europe, it is unusual for organisations to recruit in more than one country: the general pattern is that in each area of activity there is an organisation in each member state, which supports some kind of umbrella organisation at Nordic level. Perhaps only in North America will one find anything approaching the degree of cross-border...since many Canadians find it convenient to join American organisations as well as, or instead of, maintaining their own.⁸

The partition of Germany after the Second World War was in many ways different to the partition of Ireland. It was not enacted to stave off ethnic or religious conflict as Germans shared 'cultural, ethnic and linguistic characteristics' but were 'separated for strategic and ideological reasons'.⁹ The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) 'insisted that theirs was a temporary state' and they sought symbols to 'have resonance on both sides of the German-German border'.¹⁰ Heather Dichter explains how, on the other hand, through international sport, the East German regime hoped 'it could gain de facto recognition on a large scale'.¹¹ With the political partition came partition in soccer. Three football associations were founded by the early 1950s, football associations for East and West Germany as well as for the Saarland for a brief period whilst it was a French Protectorate.¹² Mirroring the political divide, there was intense rivalry between both East and West Germany in soccer. Even though West Germany went on to win the 1974 World Cup as host nation, the 1-0 loss to East Germany in the group stages is still considered by many West Germans as one of its most embarrassing moments, in its soccer history.¹³ Due to an IOC stipulation, the two Germanys had to compete as one German team for the Olympic Games from 1956 to 1964, 'using a non-partisan flag and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" as their anthem'.¹⁴ However, according to Udo Merkel, 'due to the size of the West German population, the political influence of the West German government and the achievements of West German athletes, the East-German David demanded separation from the West German Goliath so that from 1964 onwards the

German states sent two separate teams to the Olympic Games'.¹⁵ From then onwards, West and East Germany remained bitter rivals right up to reunification in 1990. Even in the early 1970s, when a number of small steps were taken to normalise the relationship between the two German states, sport exchanges were not part of this agenda.¹⁶

The breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia by the early 1990s also saw the dismantling of the Soviet and Yugoslav sporting federations. The Soviet Union, in its initial years had quite similar sporting structures to those in Ireland. The change in its political structure did not see a change in the sporting structures of the nations within the Soviet Union, similar to most sports in Ireland after partition. On taking power in 1917, the Bolsheviks initially allowed for freedom of expression for the many ethnic and national identities that existed within what was the old Russian Empire. The first Soviet census which was taken in 1926 showed there were 178 officially recognised nationalities within the state.¹⁷ Vladimir Lenin established the Commissariat of Nationalities, the brief of which was to devise ways of stimulating the appearance of ethnic and national self-determination within the embrace of the Soviet Union'. However, Joseph Stalin was placed in charge of this operation and once he succeeded Lenin as Communist Party Chairman, he 'did more than any other single figure to repress national and ethnic minorities'.¹⁸

Soccer remained largely unchanged from its pre-revolutionary and localised structure up until the mid-1930s. During Stalin's reign, his campaign to advance the cause of Soviet nationalism saw the dismantling of localised soccer structures to 'be replaced by the first all-Union league within which all leading Soviet cities would have representative teams - as was the case with all other Western European nations - and from which the national team would be selected'.¹⁹ The Soviet Union/USSR team became a member of FIFA in 1946. For years, particularly during times of relative economic prosperity, it was fashionable for Soviet citizens to support the Soviet Union soccer team.²⁰ However, 'the further away from the Russian centre the less likely it was that Soviet sport drew local support. In the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, there was little if any good feeling towards Soviet football'.²¹ Estonians were more likely to support Canada than the Soviet Union in ice hockey matches. The

Soviet Union example highlights what Sugden and Bairner describe as dominant groups in society using 'sport to consolidate their control over particular societies by imposing a specific value system on the entire population'. On the other hand, they claim, 'subordinate groups can also use sport to bring together oppositional forces and articulate challenges to the prevailing value system and the power relations which are dependent on it'.²²

In the build-up to independence, soccer made its own contribution in certain regions, with some soccer federations declaring their 'national' independence before political sovereignty had been established. On the eve of the 1990 season, the Lithuanians and Georgians announced that their teams were quitting all Soviet competitions in all sports and that their players would no longer represent the USSR. They announced plans for separate Georgian and Lithuanian soccer leagues.²³ Other sporting bodies soon followed. In 1991, the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee re-established its membership of the IOC. The Soviet authorities allowed a degree of independence for the Lithuanian basketball team with the national team playing independently against foreign teams, something impossible in other sports in the Soviet Union, and a huge source of national pride. It offered Lithuania a rare chance to express a distinct national identity externally whilst under Soviet control.²⁴ Even though Georgian sport was an entirely Soviet creation, its most successful soccer club, Dinamo Tbilisi became a source of Georgian pride and national identity and spurred the Georgian Football Association to withdraw its teams from Soviet competition. It established a Georgian Soccer Federation and instructed national players to play soccer for Georgia. The Soviet authorities did not accept this situation and it was only in 1993 that FIFA and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) recognised the Georgian Federation.²⁵

The sporting federations of countries such as Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia were independent and separate in theory before the fall of communism. In reality, they were all state-owned and state-directed. Sports clubs were linked to or based in the armed forces, the police, state industry or state-controlled unions.²⁶ Polish sports policy, for example, was regularly interfered with by Moscow. This shows, as Leary asserts, that countries of the 'Iron Curtain' were unlike the Irish border, as their 'social models' were fundamentally changed along

with their legal and political systems.²⁷ Following the Soviet example, Poland withdrew its soccer teams from the European Cup and European Cup Winners' Cup competitions in 1968 and boycotted the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984.²⁸ It was only with the fall of communism that Polish sporting bodies could re-gain independence and introduce democratic measures. The creation of two separate Czech and Slovak states in 1992 also brought about the creation of separate sporting structures. It also triggered a keen sense of sporting rivalry towards the Czech Republic within the Slovak sports audience which did not exist to any significant level during the common state.²⁹

When Yugoslavia disintegrated as a country in the early 1990s so too did its national soccer team which had acted as a unifying force throughout the Communist period. Sugden and Bairner argue that soccer's role as a unifying force in Yugoslavia has been greatly exaggerated, though, claiming a much-lauded match between Croatia Zagreb and Red Star Belgrade was actually 'war minus the shooting'.³⁰ When Red Star Belgrade won the European Cup in 1991, the team was composed of four Serbs, two from Montenegro, two from Macedonia, one born in Serbia but brought up in Romania, one born in Germany of mixed Serb and Croat parentage and one Moslem from the border of Montenegro and Bosnia. There was, though, an enormous Serbian Orthodox Church flag on display at the match with a notable absence of Yugoslav flags.³¹ The 1990-91 league season was a very difficult one with major security issues concerns for those travelling, far more so than in Belfast or Dublin in 1920-21. Five Croatian clubs and one Slovenian club resigned from the top flight of the league in the summer of 1991 and went on to join their own national leagues. Bosnian and Macedonian clubs left the following season. When Montenegro gained independence in 2006, its soccer association also gained independence.³² Despite Serbian opposition and it not being a United Nations member, Kosovo was admitted as a FIFA member in 2016.³³

In 1955, Greek Cypriots began an anti-colonial struggle against the British, leading to Cyprus gaining independence and forming the Republic of Cyprus in 1960.³⁴ Once independence was achieved, the social situation between the two main ethnic groups (Greek and Turkish Cypriots) deteriorated, culminating in the Turkish invasion of 1974, leading to the deaths of approximately 6,000 people.³⁵ The

northern part of Cyprus was occupied and granted by Turkey to the Turkish Cypriots. In 1983 the north declared itself independent as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), recognised only by Turkey as a state.³⁶ Mirroring the political conflict has been the history of soccer on the island. In 1934, clubs from the Greek and Turkish communities set up the Cyprus Football Association (CFA) and an all-island league ran until 1955.³⁷ The CFA became a member of FIFA in 1948. However, in 1955 the Turkish Cypriot clubs split from the CFA after Çetinkaya, the only Turkish Cypriot team to win the all-island league in 1953, was barred from playing a Greek Cypriot side, in Nicosia for security reasons.³⁸ The Greek Cypriot struggle against the British had just begun, making it unsafe for Turkish Cypriots to attend Greek Cypriot soccer stadia. The Turkish Cypriots set up their own association the same year, Kıbrıs Türk Futbol Federasyonu (KTFF), which was unable to become a member of FIFA.³⁹ Before the TRNC declared independence in 1983, Turkish Cypriots played some friendly matches. Since declaring independence, the TRNC was further ostracised by the international soccer community and its 'footballers left in limbo'. Although a national team existed, the lack of recognition from FIFA and UEFA as well as pressure from Greece and Greek Cyprus ensured no opponents for the team.⁴⁰ In 2007, the CFA proposed for the KTFF to end its period of wilderness by becoming part of the CFA. However, both sides could not reach an agreement. Additional talks between both parties commenced in 2012, progressing, though, at a very slow pace. This was mainly due to Greek and Turkish Cypriots also trying to reach a political agreement at the same time. One TRNC adviser said 'our national policy in Cyprus and our national policy in sport must be in harmony'.⁴¹

North and South Korea, North and South Yemen, Israel and Palestine, and the Indian sub-continent are just some other examples where the political environment has a direct impact on the sporting structures within those regions.⁴² For most divided jurisdictions, the national political climate has been a significant cause of division within sport throughout the years. A striking feature of sporting bodies in Ireland is the freedom they were allowed to forge their own future once Ireland was partitioned. In the majority of cases elsewhere, sporting bodies had to divide or unify once their political jurisdiction were divided or unified. There was no choice for those sporting federations. There was no national political intervention in Ireland. All

sports were allowed to make their own decisions in how they were governed after partition. It was an anomaly that soccer did not remain united.

International Sporting Politics

One of the biggest challenges facing the nascent FAI in 1921 was to gain international recognition, a challenge that involved the active participation of FIFA, the FA and the International Board (See Chapter Four). In Irish athletics and cycling, the NACA was vehemently opposed to partition in Irish sports and fought a campaign against the IAAF and the IOC to compete on an all-Ireland basis, a campaign it ultimately lost and that led to its wilderness at the Olympic Games for over twenty years (See p. 156).

As mentioned above, the IOC was responsible for having one German team compete at the Olympic Games from 1956 to 1964 until it allowed both German countries to be represented separately. The IOC was also centrally involved with China and its relationship with Taiwan. Chiang Kai-shek lost the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and moved the government of the Republic of China from mainland China to Taiwan and, at the same time, Mao Zedong led the People's Republic of China from its establishment in 1949. Chiang continued to claim dominion over all of China, including Taiwan and the territories led by the People's Republic of China, which also claimed that Taiwan was a part of its country. Both parties viewed each other as illegitimate. The 'Chinese Question' became a continuous problem in international politics during the Cold War, which also expanded from politics onto the sports field and into the Olympic Movement'.⁴³ Heather Dichter states that there is a 'close relationship between sport and politics' and sports federations, as international NGOs, 'could serve as influential actors in world affairs'.⁴⁴ The majority of the members of the China National Amateur Athletic Federation, also called the Chinese Olympic Committee, followed Chiang's government to Taiwan and the IOC accepted Taiwan as the new headquarters of the Chinese Olympic Committee. This was because the western powers, led by the USA, supported the Republic of China in Taiwan. It also represented the whole of China in the UN, as well as maintaining diplomatic relations with most other countries.⁴⁵ In 1954 the IOC agreed to allow two Chinese teams to participate. This decision was unsatisfactory to Peking who opposed the so-called 'two China' or 'one China, one Taiwan' policy and refused to participate in Olympic Games if Taiwan was allowed to compete. Peking considered Avery Brundage, the IOC president, a 'faithful menial of the U.S. Imperialists bent on serving their

plot of creating “two Chinas” and broke off relations with the IOC.⁴⁶ Once relations were opened up between US president Richard Nixon and the People’s Republic of China, as well as receiving recognition from the UN whilst expelling Taiwan from the Security Council, the People’s Republic of China applied to re-join the IOC.⁴⁷ It also looked for the expulsion of Taiwan. A compromise was reached in 1979 when the IOC admitted both Chinese entities on the condition that Taiwan change its name to ‘Chinese Taipei’, an arrangement that still exists today.⁴⁸ The Taiwan soccer association is also recognised by FIFA as the Chinese Taipei Football Association. Other Chinese territories recognised by FIFA are Hong Kong and Macau.⁴⁹ Another territory of China, a disputed one, Tibet, is not recognised by FIFA nor the IOC even though it has a national soccer association and team since 2001.⁵⁰ Despite protests from China, the Tibet national team played an unofficial match in 2001 against another association not recognised by FIFA, Greenland.⁵¹

Greenland holds a similar constitutional position to the Faroe Islands within the Kingdom of Denmark and yet the Faroe Islands has been a member of FIFA since 1994. Under Article 10 of the FIFA statutes, ‘Any Association which is responsible for organising and supervising football in its country may become a Member of FIFA. In this context, the expression “country” shall refer to an independent state recognised by the international community. Subject to par. 5 and par. 6 below, only one Association shall be recognised in each country’.⁵² Paragraph 5 states that ‘each of the four British Associations is recognised as a separate Member of FIFA’ whilst paragraph 6 asserts that ‘an Association in a region which has not yet gained independence may, with the authorisation of the Association in the country on which it is dependent, also apply for admission to FIFA’.⁵³ FIFA has demonstrated great levels of inconsistency in applying these rules. Zanzibar and New Caledonia applied for membership of FIFA in the early 2000s, both meeting similar criteria to join. Both were ‘members of their regional confederations, the Confederation Africaine de Football and Oceania respectively, and both had the permission of Tanzania and France respectively to try to join FIFA’.⁵⁴ FIFA accepted New Caledonia’s bid but rejected Zanzibar’s, explaining the decision by saying that New Caledonia was in the process of gaining autonomy, and the distance of New Caledonia in the Pacific Ocean to France made participation in French competitions impossible. There has been no independence movement in Zanzibar even though there is local autonomy, and it is a short distance to Tanzania with regular transport and clubs from Zanzibar playing in competitions in

Tanzania.⁵⁵ According to Paul Darby, FIFA had for many years demonstrated a 'patronizing, Eurocentric and neoimperialistic style' towards its African constituency.⁵⁶ When the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), seeking independence from France, established an FLN 'Revolutionary Eleven' international team, FIFA responded by banning all 'Algerian players who agreed to join the FLN team. This ban was also extended to all national teams that played against the FLN team. For example, in 1958, responding to a demand made by the French Football Federation, the Moroccan Federation of Football was simply excluded from FIFA'.⁵⁷

Although a national football team exists in the Turkish Republic on Northern Cyprus, the lack of recognition from FIFA and UEFA has contributed to it being unable to play against any opponents.⁵⁸ Turkish club Fenerbahçe held a training camp in the TRNC and planned a game against a local side but FIFA's threat of sanctions against Fenerbahçe ensured that the game was never played.⁵⁹ In July 2007, the English team Luton Town FC and the Turkish Cypriot team Çetinkaya had scheduled to play in a friendly match 'but they had to call it off after CFA's complaints to the English Football Association as well as FIFA and UEFA that Çetinkaya did not belong to any Association recognized by them'.⁶⁰ Starved of opposition, the KTFF eventually voted in May 2015 to join the CFA, the only soccer association recognised by FIFA in Cyprus, as it would allow KTFF clubs and players to come back from their wilderness and isolation from the soccer world.⁶¹ The inability of the Turkish Cypriot team to gain recognition or opponents highlights the power FIFA currently wields in global soccer, a power that has increased significantly since the FAI was looking to gain membership in the early 1920s. In the 1920s, the home associations, including the IFA, had 'a somewhat arrogant belief that they still knew best' and 'no one could tell them anything about football'. By the 1940s, FIFA had superseded the home associations and is now considered 'the United Nations of football'.⁶² Similarly, the skiing sporting federation, Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS), was dominated by Nordic traditionalists from Scandinavia until the 1930s who were considered by the Alpine modernists from Central Europe to be patronising and dictatorial. With the increasingly popular Alpine skiers threatening to secede from FIS, the sporting federation eventually was forced to embrace both Nordic and Alpine skiing competitions under its fold.⁶³

Spain, with its potent regional identities, has often struggled to offer a united front in soccer. Even though Spain was among the founder members of FIFA in 1904, its

representative was not the Spanish FA, for no such organisation existed. Rather Spain's representative was merely a member of Madrid FC with no national mandate from anyone.⁶⁴ Soccer, like all aspects of Spanish life, was plagued by turbulence which culminated in the Spanish Civil War. Even though the war was not over by 1937, FIFA recognised who the victor was likely to be, and accepted the 'Francoist Royal Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) rather than the republican-nominated institution as the official delegate to the organization'.⁶⁵ During the Spanish Civil War, Basque and Catalan 'national' teams went on international tours. A Basque team called 'the Euskadi Republic' went on tour in Eastern Europe and South America to raise money for the Basque cause until banned by FIFA.⁶⁶ Sugden and Bairner talks of FIFA and the IOC holding the 'extremely benign view of the role which sport can play in healing political division'.⁶⁷ In reality, sporting federations have fuelled divisions as well as heal them.

The partition of Palestine, like Ireland, emerged 'from both colonial histories and immediate local circumstances'. Unlike Ireland, however, it included, 'alongside the idea of territorial division, the notion and vocabulary of population transfer'.⁶⁸ Also, whilst a state of Israel materialised, 'no division of territory between a Jewish Israel and an Arab Palestine ever emerged'.⁶⁹ Palestine has fought for many years to gain international recognition. It has achieved recognition from FIFA and the IOC, without having achieved full nationhood status by the UN. In this way, 'Palestinian identity is legitimized through participation in international soccer'.⁷⁰ The original Palestinian Football Association (PFA) was founded in 1928, serving the territory of the British Mandate of Palestine. This team, however:

was comprised only of Jewish players and thus served the interests of the Jewish community.

When the state of Israel was founded in 1948, the Israel Football Association replaced the PFA as the representative in FIFA. In 1952, therefore, a new Palestinian Football Federation (PFF) was founded for the Palestinian people. In 1962, the PFF was formally changed to the PFA.⁷¹

The PFA became a FIFA member in 1998 having gained recognition previously with other soccer bodies such as the Union of Arab Football Associations, the West Asian Football Federation and the Asian Football Confederation.⁷² FIFA also provided money for a national stadium in Al-Ram near Ramallah.

Isolated by FIFA and the international community, some territories have joined another organisation called the New Football Federations Board which became the

Confederation of Independent Football Associations (ConIFA) in 2013 to provide their 'national football' teams with much needed competition. ConIFA organises its own world cup competition, most recently held and won by the host 'nation', Abkhazia, the partially recognised state within Georgia.⁷³ Recognising the fluidity of borders and of the nation-state model, the IOC has recently created an 'IOC Refugee Olympic Team', a way to show its 'commitment to play its part in addressing the global refugee crisis'.⁷⁴

It is clear that powerful international sporting federations such as FIFA and the IOC have played significant parts in fomenting and healing divisions to sporting splits around the globe. It is important to reiterate that at the time of the divisions of soccer and athletics in Ireland in the 1920s, neither FIFA nor the IOC were the powerful rule-laden bodies they are today, a key factor in determining the decision-making power they had to cause or heal division. UK bodies like the FA wielded far more power at the time of the Irish soccer split. From the end of the Second World War, the international federations had become the dominant global governing authorities, extending that authority considerably up to the present day. Acceptance or non-acceptance to such bodies, and of their decisions, has been the decisive factor in causing and/or settling sporting splits in many jurisdictions. Although their decisions and interventions in general, are based on international norms formulated by bodies such as the UN, there are many instances where international sporting federations make decisions, often contradictory ones, on a whim, arbitrarily.

Geography

As in Ireland, different geographical features and terrains have been a major factor in causing many sporting splits around the world. One of the most striking examples is that of skiing. Andrew Denning claims that 'the international skiing community came to be defined by a certain geographical determinism'. Nordic and Alpine enthusiasts 'agreed that their preferred forms of skiing had evolved to suit differing landscapes'. Whilst Alpine skiers preferred downhill skiing, 'Nordic skiers adhered to a traditional vision of the sport that involved not only descents but also climbs and traverses'. The schism 'pitted a vision of skiing rooted in centuries of tradition [Nordic] against one that stressed its dynamic modernity [Alpine]'.⁷⁵

The partition of India was 'a sharp, sudden shock in contrast with Ireland'. Arguably, according to Kate O'Malley, 'British administrators had learned from their Irish experience

and did not drag out the process, and partition was definitive and was not reviewed afterwards'.⁷⁶ The 'exact geographical disposition of the territory was left to the British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe, whose new borders were not made public for two days after formal independence at midnight on August 15, 1947'.⁷⁷ A consequence of the 'geographic disposition' was to separate Pakistan from East Pakistan by 2,000 kilometres. Cricket players from East Pakistan felt they were discriminated against in being selected for the Pakistan national team, with not one East Pakistani being picked.⁷⁸ Once Bangladesh became independent in 1971, it was able to cut loose from the cultural shackles of its dominant partner in coalition, West Pakistan.⁷⁹

As mentioned above, New Caledonia was admitted as a member of FIFA, partly due to its distant location from its home country, France. With Turkey straddling both Europe and Asia, its soccer federation was in a peculiar position from 1955 to 1961. Faced with 'FIFA's rejection of its membership of UEFA, but having been accepted as a natural member by UEFA itself, Turkey found itself in the middle of an "Asia–Europe" situation. Although Turkey participated in all UEFA organisations at club and national levels, it was placed in the Asian groups by FIFA for the World Cup and the Olympics' for that period.⁸⁰

The geography of Palestine has created logistical difficulties for the Palestinian international soccer men's team to train, seeing as the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are separated geographically.⁸¹ Also in the Middle East, soccer has facilitated union between North and South Yemen. North and South Yemen were created in 1904, reflecting the differences between the regions in religion, politics, language, diet and costume.⁸² In soccer, 'while national teams represented statehood and nationalism, matches between the two states promoted national identity and pan-Yemeni nationalism'.⁸³ In 1988, a unified Yemeni national team was formed, with players selected equally from North and South Yemen and training alternating between both jurisdictions. The move was an advanced step in the process of uniting the two Yemen's, which happened two years later in 1990.⁸⁴ This is an example of what Sahlins describes as states not simply imposing 'their values and boundaries on local society'. Other factors such as sport can be motive forces 'in the formation and consolidation of nationhood and the territorial state'.⁸⁵

Tim Marshall in *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Tell You Everything You Need to Know About Global Politics*, argues that 'Geopolitics looks at the ways in which international affairs can be understood through geographical factors: not just the

physical...but also climate, demographics, cultural regions, and access to natural resources'.⁸⁶ The geographic physical features of regions like Quebec to the rest of Canada and Catalonia to the rest of Spain, like Ulster in Ireland, do not provide formidable barriers. In those cases, other geopolitical factors such as religion, language and ethnicity impact those geographic regions, with major ramifications for sporting bodies within those territories too. Reflecting its ethnic and linguistic differences, for many of the citizens of the Canadian province of Quebec, they see themselves in sport as different to the rest of Canada. People from Quebec believe they have been discriminated against and underrepresented in Canadian national teams. Just one member of the men's Canadian ice hockey team at the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games came from Quebec.⁸⁷ Jean Harvey has argued that 'French Canadian members of Canadian national teams are divided between their Quebecois and Canadian identities', similar to how Ulster Protestants are divided between their British, Irish and Ulster identities. Whilst 'English Canada was following the performances of the Toronto Maple Leafs on *Hockey Night in Canada*, French Canada was watching the Montreal Canadiens on *La soiree du hockey* where the performances of the French Canadian players were consistently been celebrated'.⁸⁸ People identify more with their province, many wish for Quebec to be independent of Canada, than with the entire country. The different regional identities in Spain has made unity in sport a difficult proposition. People in many instances identify more with their region than with Spain, and in soccer through their regional clubs. FC Barcelona represents the Catalonia region, Athletic Bilbao the Basque region. Athletic Bilbao demonstrates its commitment to the Basque region by selecting players only born in that region.⁸⁹

Kate O'Malley discusses the parallels between both Ireland and India where 'the majority communities' emphasis upon the link between culture and nationality contributed significantly to the closing of the anti-Home Rule ranks – in Ulster in order to save them from "Rome Rule", and for the Muslims their resolve to mobilize behind the Muslim League lest they end up in a "Hindu Raj".⁹⁰ The partition of India was based primarily on 'otherness' and religion with the formation of the Islamic Pakistan and East Pakistan (later to become Bangladesh) in 1947.⁹¹ Religion played a minor part in leading to the Irish soccer split, as highlighted previously. Although the IFA appeared to favour, on occasion, unionist-Protestant clubs over nationalist-Catholic clubs, such as Belfast Celtic, there is little evidence of overt sectarianism on the part of the soccer authorities in Ireland. In India, new sporting

federations were formed around the religious partition. Sectarian divisions in sport before partition were clearly demonstrated through the relationship between the Mohammedan Sporting Club, representative of the minority Muslim community in Calcutta and the Hindu dominated Indian Football Association.⁹² The highly successful club withdrew from the Indian Football Association-run league a number of times from 1937 to 1940 for acts by the football association it deemed to be discriminatory towards the club. It also helped to form a rival Bengal Football Association in 1939 for a brief period.⁹³ Immediately after partition, most of the club's patrons moved to either East or West Pakistan, with the club never able to revive its former glories.⁹⁴

Religious and ethnic divides have been prevalent in politics and in sports in the former Yugoslavia and in Israel and Palestine. As mentioned earlier, only Jewish players were allowed to compete in the Palestinian soccer team before Israel gained independence in 1948.⁹⁵ In recent times, soccer has been used to help unite the conflicting religions in the region. A team representing an Arab Israeli majority town in the northern part of Israel, Bnei Sakhnin, has helped to ease tensions between the Arab and Jewish communities. The team won the Israeli State Cup in 2004, comprising of Muslim, Christian and Jewish players.⁹⁶

In pre-independence Algeria, 'indigenous Muslims' founded their own Muslim sports clubs, sometimes without the consent of the colonial authorities.⁹⁷ Most:

of the names of such 'indigenous' clubs began with the words 'club Musulman', or 'Union sportive Musulmane'. Islam was thus a fundamental element and symbol of differentiation, between Muslim and non-Muslim clubs. In addition, a considerable number of Muslim soccer clubs expressed their nationalist identity by adopting as their team colours the colours of the 'unofficial' Algerian national flag, which were green, white and red.⁹⁸

Class differences and the related issue of professionalism over amateurism were driving forces in the rugby splits of England and Australia. The English Football league was also initially divided along similar lines and it too had a strong geographic element to its divide.⁹⁹

Geographic barriers are not just caused by physical obstructions such as mountain ranges and rivers. Readman, Radding and Bryant argue that borderlands in Europe have avoided serious scrutiny in the past due to 'the long-assumed naturalness of European borders (and thus borderlands), which were seen almost as ontological givens, derived from the physical geography of the continent itself'.¹⁰⁰

Other geographic factors including demographics and culture abound in Europe, like elsewhere, and have contributed to sporting divisions globally, as they have in Ireland between the north-east and the rest of the island.

Internal Politics

Whilst internal politics within the IFA were at the heart of the division within Irish soccer, they were key factors in fomenting or healing divisions in many other jurisdictions around the world. Borders and divisions are not just determined by the political centre. They develop internally, from the ground up, in many instances. Analysing internal political factors allows us to connect the ‘macroscopic’ political and diplomatic histories and the ‘molecular’ history of local communities and organisations.¹⁰¹ In India, the battle for the control of soccer was fought on very similar lines to that in Ireland. The Indian Football Association was the oldest association in India and the only internationally recognised one by the 1930s.¹⁰² Paralleling the Belfast-centric IFA, the Indian Football Association was purely an association for the government of the sport in Bengal, and more particularly Calcutta, and it was followed by similar associations in the other regions of India.¹⁰³ A bitter struggle ensued during the 1930s between the Indian Football Association on the one side and the Western and Northern Indian states on the other for the control of soccer in India, the former wishing to govern soccer for the whole of India. After a number of failed attempts to reach an agreement between the Bengal body and the other state associations, they reached a compromise in 1937 to form an All Indian Football Federation, a body which gave considerable importance to the Indian Football Association, given its previous standing in the game in India.¹⁰⁴

A number of factors led to the great rugby split in England of 1895, including class and geography. Internal politics was also decisive in causing the split. The Rugby Football Union, fearing its game was in danger of being taken over by culturally different northerners, had no desire for compromise, no desire to change the game, preferring the split that followed.¹⁰⁵ Similar reasons caused the rugby split in Sydney, Australia and in New Zealand. Many rugby clubs and players moved to rugby league in Sydney for local issues such as divisional changes and unfair treatment meted out by the main rugby authority, the Metropolitan Rugby Union.¹⁰⁶

As stated above, in Cyprus, a split was caused by an internal soccer matter relating to the national political environment, when in 1955, the Turkish Cypriot clubs split from the CFA after Çetinkaya, the Turkish Cypriot team, was barred from playing a Greek Cypriot side, Pezoporikos, in Nicosia due to security concerns.¹⁰⁷ This incident was almost a direct replica of the catalyst causing the Irish soccer split, Shelbourne having to travel to Belfast for an Irish Cup semi-final replay (See p. 112).

Intra-organisational rivalry has been as decisive a factor in causing sporting divisions as the more politically centred factors ordinarily analysed. Irish soccer is not unique in being divided on issues relating to perceptions of bias in player and venue selection and internal power struggles. It has been a primary factor in dividing sporting bodies in many entities throughout the world.

Conclusion

Assessing the role of sport and sports organisations in divided societies on a transnational basis provides further examples of how borders are 'claimed, defined, and contested by social, ethnic, and national groups, as well as by institutions'.¹⁰⁸ The 'reactions, counter-reactions, and interactions' of sports to the creation or removal of borders, external and internal, demonstrates the complexity of borders globally.¹⁰⁹ That decisions from the political centre are intertwined with people's responses to them on the ground is not unique to Ireland, as demonstrated by a myriad of international examples.¹¹⁰ It still is important to recognize that 'states were crucial sources of institutional presence in many borderland contexts'.¹¹¹ This was true in a sporting context too where countries such as the Soviet Union used sport 'as propaganda for the success of their political system'.¹¹² Sahlins has provided an example of how Cerdans used the Pyrenean border dividing Cerdanya to pursue 'local interests'.¹¹³ The pursuit of 'local interests' in a global sporting context was common too for nation-states, supra-national bodies like FIFA, and internally within organisations, thus providing strong evidence that all borders are 'subjective, negotiated, and contested'.¹¹⁴

It is clear that the Irish soccer split was not a particularly unique division in a global context. It was unique in as far as all societies are unique, but the reasons that led to and maintained the Irish soccer split, mainly internal politics, national politics, geography and international sporting politics were prevalent factors for many sporting splits

internationally. In many ways, soccer as well as athletics and cycling, although somewhat unique on the island of Ireland, reflect the international political frontiers as is the case in most jurisdictions around the world. As described by John Whyte, the pattern in Ireland for sporting bodies, as well as many other Irish organisations, to ignore the international political frontier was very unique, particularly in Europe.¹¹⁵ The example of cross-border sporting competitions between Canada and the USA demonstrates the Irish example is not that unique and the truly 'porous, open and contested' nature of political boundaries overall.¹¹⁶

It is important to note that many regions have been able to avoid schism and remain united. Readman, Radding and Bryant contend that many analyses are predicated 'on the development of mutual antagonisms, divisions, and "Othering"'. The reality is 'more complex', where borderlands have acted as much as 'zones of interaction as they were of demarcation and division'.¹¹⁷ As Alan Tomlinson, in his study of unity within Swiss sport, claims, 'the contribution of sport is not to generate and promote social division, rather it is to celebrate cultural diversity. At local, regional and national levels sport is one of the cultural forms which expresses and symbolizes an authentically felt social harmony and unity-in-difference. Difference and diversity do not, in this sense, constitute division'.¹¹⁸ It is clear that those sporting bodies and territories who acknowledge the differences amongst their ranks, those that are willing to compromise to accommodate all traditions, have been able to do what so many others have not, including soccer administrators in Ireland, and retain unity.

Conclusion

Through the prism of the Irish soccer split, this thesis has analysed the partition of Ireland at the time of the creation of the Irish border. In ascertaining the reasons for the division in Irish soccer, the main determining factors were found to be the national political environment, internal governance and geography. International sporting federations, through their involvement with national political issues and their own internal governance structures, also contributed to the division in Irish soccer. By scrutinising how the political environment contributed to division in soccer in Ireland, this thesis has demonstrated the complexity and multiple dimensions involved in the partition of Ireland and more generally with Irish identities. It has shown how matters of state policy impacted on people and the organisations they were involved in. The thesis has spotlighted internal governance as an issue, hitherto greatly ignored, and thus provided an integrative (top-down and bottom-up) approach to uncovering reactions to the creation of the border in Ireland. The complex Irish geographic dimensions, incorporating physical landscape and national identity elements, are mirrored in the Irish soccer community. Soccer offers an excellent case study to explore these multifaceted geographic dimensions. By offering a transnational comparison of other borders and sporting splits around the world, the thesis goes beyond the regional and local in offering a global perspective on borderlands and particularly on sporting divisions.

Whilst the political partition of Ireland is not as strong a determining factor in causing the partition in Irish soccer as some historians and sociologists suggest, there still is a clear link between both.¹ Given its multi-layered dimensions, soccer could not be divorced from the national political climate that engulfed Ireland for over a decade from 1912 onwards. Ged Martin's observation that the decade 'counted for a great deal' holds true for soccer, too.² Considering the nature and scale of events that occurred that decade, including the third home rule crisis, the First World War, the Easter Rising, the War of Independence and the partition of Ireland, soccer could not but be deeply affected by such vast upheavals. By looking at how such occurrences impacted on soccer, the thesis has shown, to quote Michael Laffan, how 'great events affected the lives of ordinary people'.³ An example of what Leary describes as the intertwining of events emanating from the political centre and people's responses to them is how the Irish soccer community, particularly its clubs based in Belfast, was drawn into the political polarisation between the unionist and nationalist communities from 1912 onwards.⁴ In many ways the First World War was more detrimental

for maintaining unity within Irish soccer than the political partition of Ireland. Soccer was divided north and south for the duration of the war. Thomas Hennessey speaks of a 'psychological partition' that developed between north and south during the war years, something keenly felt by those in the Irish soccer community too.⁵ Many involved in the sport in the south, like most nationalists, switched allegiance from the Irish Party to Sinn Féin by the war's end, and thus supported a brand of nationalism even less appealing to unionists than that promoted by the Irish Party. The War of Independence showed how the soccer community diverged north and south, with many Dublin-based soccer players and supporters joining and following the IRA on the one hand, contrasting sharply to the mainly-unionist supporting IFA on the other. Paul Bew's assertion that it was not a period for compromise nor nuance was clearly demonstrated by the tensions that existed in the IFA in this period.⁶ It is clear that the national political environment clearly had a negative impact on maintaining unity within the sport in Ireland.

It is also clear that there was a lot more complexity, ambiguity and flexibility during this period than simplistic narratives of the past recall. In looking at this period in Irish history and the partition of Ireland in particular, the thesis has attempted to move beyond looking at history from a rear-view mirror and instead focused on the 'lived experience' of people and organisations at the time.⁷ This has resulted in two main conclusions. Firstly, there was nothing pre-destined about the partition 'solution' reached in 1921 and secondly, the political and legal partition was not followed by a social and cultural partition. Michael Laffan is correct when he claimed, that in 1911, 'Irishmen of all political opinions would have been amazed if they could have foreseen the division of Ireland into two separate states ten years later. There was nothing predestined about the settlements of 1920-1'.⁸ Challenging the unavoidability and irreversibility of partition, Michael Hopkinson argues that 'there was no inevitability about the precise form of the Government of Ireland Bill nor about the laissez-faire attitude taken by the British Government to the situation in the north-east between June 1920 and the Truce' in July 1921.⁹ Hopkinson also contends that the dynamic between the different factions at the time was more complex, and bemoans the tendency for historians 'to emphasise consistency and dogmatism as opposed to flexibility'.¹⁰ Many unionists sought reasonable cooperation with nationalists. Sinn Féin was not as dogmatic as some suggest and, as Hennessey notes, there were deep divisions within Sinn Féin 'regarding what form an independent Irish state should take, whether it should be

a Britannic dominion, a sovereign independent Irish kingdom, or an Irish republic'.¹¹ The evidence presented in this thesis supports Robert Lynch's assertion that partition was a 'chaotic, confused, and at time surreal process, far removed from the "natural" conferral of statehood on pre-existing homogenous populations imagined by the partitioners and later historians'.¹² Given this piecemeal and haphazard implementation of partition, it was only natural that there would be 'a myriad of reactions, counter-reactions, and interactions' from people and organisations, including from those involved in soccer.¹³

A common reaction from organisations that were governed on an all-Ireland basis pre-partition, was to remain so post-partition. Leary talks of a 'clash between conceptions of order – one, official and defined by the border' encompassing the political and regulatory frameworks of the jurisdictions, and 'the other, informally rooted in experience and practice' which could incorporate border communities and organisations such as sporting associations.¹⁴ John Whyte observed that 'organisations founded before 1921 tend to continue on their previous all-Ireland or all-archipelago basis unless something occurs to change them'.¹⁵ Leary is right when he claims 'the Irish border divided legal and political systems but not fundamentally different social models'.¹⁶ Generally, the northern government gave no clear political direction on what path organisations themselves should take once Ireland was partitioned. Although the northern government sought as little cooperation with the Irish Free State as possible, for pragmatic reasons unionist politicians agreed to maintain all-Ireland functions for lighthouses and postal services. Readman, Radding and Bryant's observation that 'no borderland is delimited by a national boundary' is pertinent here.¹⁷ In fact, an anomalous position existed whereby unionist politicians such as Thomas Moles, Thomas McMullan and John Andrews sought as much divergence politically between the north and the south on the one hand, and actively sought unity in sport on the other.¹⁸ Leary discerns, 'Whether considered in its spatial form, legal codes and institutions, fiscal regulations, or police and security apparatus, the outlines of the political state were rarely, if ever, coterminous with the lived experience of borderland communities'.¹⁹ Whilst Leary focuses on how people who lived along and close to the border reacted to partition, this thesis analyses the reactions to partition of multiple organisations, public and non-public, on the entire island. Sahlin's view that the states of France and Spain did not impose the boundary on local society in Cerdanya, rather 'the Cerdans sought to manipulate the boundary in pursuit of local interests', is relevant in Ireland's case too and with that of the

Irish soccer community.²⁰ Soccer administrators in Ireland viewed their division as an internal matter, quite separate from the political partition. Leary states that people used ‘circumstances that were not of their choosing’ (the partition of Ireland) and chose ‘to reshape, or to preserve, the conditions of their lives’.²¹ That most organisations that existed pre-1921, sporting or otherwise, chose to remain governed on an all-Ireland basis shows that the soccer example is an anomaly. The political partition of Ireland may have exacerbated tensions in soccer but it was not the primary reason for the split. The split was primarily caused and nurtured by, to coin Sahlin’s phrase, ‘the pursuit of local interests’ by the LFA/FAI and the IFA.

Given that organisations in Ireland were not subsumed by the ‘iron grip of the nation-state’ and generally chose to pursue their own path in the interests of their members, allows us go beyond the purely political and identity-based treatises of the partition of Ireland. Readman, Radding and Bryant state that nation-states are only one means of institutional presence that create borderlands. So too can supra-national entities (such as sporting federations), local governing institutions or small social organizations.²² It is in this context that the study of internal governance structures within organisations is necessary. Considering that most organisations were not obliged to follow the partition of Ireland with their own partition, it is only natural that the intra-governance make-up of organisations was a crucial factor for maintaining unity within those organisations, or not. The thesis has shown the stark contrast between the internal governance structures of organisations, sporting and otherwise, who retained their all-Ireland statuses and that of soccer after partition. The LFA held resilient and long-term resentments against the IFA spanning decades, mainly of an internal political nature. Many of the grievances and disputes that ultimately resulted in the LFA seceding from the IFA were caused by the make-up of the IFA council and its sub-committees, and the decisions made by those bodies. It is the main contention of this thesis that the Irish soccer split was caused primarily by deep rooted internal political factors and not the political partition of Ireland. Neither the IFA nor the FAI/FAIFS were partitionist bodies. Both wanted to govern soccer for the whole island initially and also sought unity on many occasions, particularly in the first decade after the split. That unity was, though, based on each body’s interpretation of what form of unity suited each association best. Both bodies sought to manipulate the national political, intra-governance, geographic, and international sporting political dimensions in pursuit of their

‘local interests’. Whilst politics and identity were important elements, those ‘local interests’ that Sahlins refers to, of an internal political nature, were the overriding factors.

It is important to recognise that the diverse geographic and identity dimensions of soccer, mirroring Irish society, were also barriers to unity within the game. Geography, according to Tim Marshall, can be viewed through a number of lenses, through the prism of physical terrain, and identity dynamics stemming from ethno-sectarianism and economics.²³ From a physical and logistical perspective, there was a separateness within the IFA between Belfast, including its hinterlands, and the rest of the country. The further away from Belfast, the less attention the IFA gave to a region, clearly demonstrated in the parent body’s neglect of Munster and Connaught. Even in Ulster, in counties such as Donegal, Fermanagh and Cavan on the periphery of the province, the IFA paid little heed. Although the IFA outwardly aimed to govern for the whole island, it remained a local body, essentially catering solely for Belfast. This physical separateness was compounded by identity dynamics where the ‘otherness’ of Belfast, ‘a very un-Irish city in a very Irish setting’,²⁴ contrasted sharply with the rest of the country. Soccer, founded, headquartered and experienced differently in Belfast than anywhere else in Ireland, mirrored wider society in Ireland around identity issues such as economics and sectarianism. These factors were important drivers in fomenting division within soccer.

However, as in wider society, there is a lot more complexity and ambiguity to the geographic and identity elements that do not fit into the ‘simplistic narrative’ characterisations between Irish Catholic nationalists and Ulster Protestant unionists.²⁵ The ‘two nations’ and ‘one nation’ theories are problematic as they side-line the enormous complexities within Irish society, complexities reflected in soccer.²⁶ Whilst Sinn Féin publicly proclaimed the whole island of Ireland was the only feasible political unit, an island ‘limned by God in water’,²⁷ some dissented privately within the party, including vice-president Father Michael O’Flanagan. He claimed ‘national and geographical boundaries scarcely ever coincide’ and whilst ‘we [nationalists] claim the right to decide what is to be our nation...We refuse them [unionists] the same right’.²⁸ James Loughlin has shown that ‘unionist efforts at identity construction were opportune’ with debates existing within unionism on whether Ireland was ‘two nations’ or ‘no nation’ at all.²⁹ Loughlin expands further by showing that Ulster Protestants’ multiple identities as British, Irish or Ulstermen limited their ‘ethnogeographical construction’ and resulted in the failure of Northern Ireland ‘to establish

national authenticity'.³⁰ These complicated identity issues were echoed in soccer too. Whilst many nationalists considered the IFA to be a 'unionist preserve', the IFA incorporated symbolism of an Irish national identity. Soccer was and is enjoyed by unionists and nationalists, Protestants and Catholics in great numbers. Garnham asserts that for both unionists and nationalists, soccer 'fitted well with their own emergent national identities'.³¹ The geographic and identity dimensions undoubtedly provided challenges for soccer authorities in Ireland to maintain unity and ultimately contributed to the game's division. The division in soccer cannot be readily explained by geography and identity issues alone though, as clearly seen by the examples in other sports, such as boxing and horse racing, and in trade unions, who were able to incorporate members from multiple backgrounds without dividing.

To determine the uniqueness or not of the Irish soccer split, an important feature of this thesis has been to analyse multiple sports and organisations from multiple jurisdictions. In a review of Peter Leary's book *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border 1922-1972*, the reviewer Peter D. O'Neill claimed Leary weaved 'between the parochial and the transnational' in his book.³² Likewise, this thesis explores how partition was 'constructed and imagined' by people themselves,³³ from local organisations in Ireland to global supra-national entities such as FIFA. Leary discusses how multinational companies have the capacity to 'disrupt state barriers and national identities' and sometime appear to challenge 'structures of hierarchy'.³⁴ This thesis has shown that the same can be said of international sports federations such as FIFA who wield enormous influence in creating or healing sporting divisions within or between nation-states. Patterns have emerged from this wide-ranging analysis of borderlands and partitions. It is clear, whether in Ireland or on the Pyrenean frontier between France and Spain, that states do 'not simply impose their values and boundaries on local society'.³⁵ Borderlands created 'as the outcome of national political events', are shaped and given significance by the 'local social relations in the borderland'.³⁶ Both are intertwined. Readman, Radding and Bryant's assertion that, 'Ambiguity, fluidity, and uncertainty were all common to life in borderlands generally', running 'counter to the assumption that borders neatly divide one group, with one set of experiences, from another, with quite different experiences', is as true for Ireland as it is for any border globally.³⁷ People and organisations, in many instances, are more interested in pursuing 'local interests' than following particular political or identity ideologies. By pragmatism

trumping politics, it is clear all borders are 'subjective, negotiated, and contested'.³⁸ The placing of the Irish soccer split in a global context reveals that the Irish sporting environment is and was unique, but, as Sugden and Bairner state, 'the problems of each society are unique and demand ad hoc responses'.³⁹ The reactions of the soccer community, all other sporting bodies, and labour and religious organisations, amongst many others, to the partition of Ireland, reveal that the Irish border, like all global borderlands, is truly 'porous, open and contested'.⁴⁰

Readman, Radding and Bryant are correct when they state it is important to write the history of borders and partitions free from 'the iron grip of the nation-state' and to interpret borders as 'places where states, individuals, and various groups interact within the contexts created in part by institutionally defined borders'.⁴¹ This thesis has contributed to a wider understanding of the partition of Ireland by moving beyond the political treatises that have dominated the topic in the past and showed how partition was realised by the 'lived experiences' of people and organisations on the ground. By examining a particular subject, the Irish soccer split, it answers wider questions on partition. The thesis provides further evidence that the partition of Ireland was not pre-determined and was full of complexities, ambiguities and widespread confusion. It confirms that the partition of Ireland does not fit into the crude narrative 'to narrow Irish identity to a simple for or against duality'.⁴² In the words of Leary, by seeking to 'query whether the state territory must inevitably provide the only logical unit for historical analysis', this thesis, building on Leary's study, helps 'to reposition how certain questions of nation and state are understood'.⁴³ Through its transnational analysis, the thesis adds to a growing global literature on the outcomes of secessions and the establishment of new political entities.

Much has been added to Irish soccer historiography in recent years with works by Curran, Toms and Tynan adding to earlier work completed by Garnham. It still is an underdeveloped area, far behind the volumes of work that exist on the GAA. This thesis augments Irish soccer historiography significantly by providing a comprehensive analysis of the most defining incident of the sport's history in the country, its division. It adds to Irish sport historiography generally by focusing on governance and administrative aspects of sports, an area inadequately researched previously. In its analysis on how Irish sports reacted to partition, it is also one of a very few studies of multiple sports from an historic perspective in Ireland.⁴⁴

The limited scholarly research on soccer history has resulted in constraints on the thesis that also demonstrate the area's opportunity for development. For example, due to the lack of information available on FAI and IFA administrators, it has been hard to obtain a complete picture of the people tasked with governing soccer in Ireland. The lack of research on Irish sporting governing bodies has also hindered the thesis's opportunity to analyse other sporting bodies in more detail, an area that would add greatly to our understanding on how sports functioned in the past. Given that local communities and organisations play a vital role in shaping and constructing borders, it is important that we understand their internal dynamics in more detail. It is also clear that much is needed to be done to further link the politics of partition with people's and organisations' responses to them. There is great scope for more comprehensive analyses on how organisations in areas such as religion, education, and health, amongst many others, responded to partition.

In its entirety, this thesis shows that the Irish soccer split was caused primarily by deep rooted internal political factors and not the political partition of Ireland. It adds significantly to Irish sport historiography through its unique emphasis on sporting governance and administration. It contributes to sports historiography and transnational historiography in general by analysing how sports interacted and reacted to the creation and removal of borders; and it adds greatly to Irish historiography through its study of the complex responses of people and organisations to the political partition of Ireland, arguably the largest legacy issue in modern Irish history.

Endnotes

Introduction

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Conclusion

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Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	1	0	3	1	1	0	1	0	7
Finance	0	0	4	0	2	0	1	1	8
Emergency	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	6
International	1	0	3	1	1	1	0	0	7
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Rules Revision	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Advisory	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	6
1913 – 1914									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	0	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	7
Finance	0	1	5	0	2	0	0	1	9
Emergency	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	6
International	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	7
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
Rules Revision	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	5
1914 – 1915									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	0	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	8
Finance	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	1	7
Emergency	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	4

Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Rules Revision	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
1915 – 1916									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	5
Finance	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	6
Emergency	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	6
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Rules Revision	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	5
1916 – 1917									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	1	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	7
Finance	1	0	5	1	1	0	0	1	9
Emergency	1	0	6	1	0	0	0	1	9
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	1	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	7
Rules Revision	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	6
1917 – 1918									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	1	0	4	1	2	0	0	0	8

Finance	1	0	3	0	1	0	1	1	7
Emergency	1	0	7	1	0	0	0	1	10
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	1	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	8
Rules Revision	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	1	7
Referees	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	7
1918 – 1919									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	6
Finance	1	0	4	1	1	0	1	1	9
Emergency	2	0	8	2	0	0	0	1	13
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	2	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	9
Rules Revision	0	0	4	2	0	0	0	1	7
Referees	1	0	3	2	0	1	0	1	8
International	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	4
1919 – 1920									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	1	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	7
Finance	1	0	4	2	0	0	1	0	8
Emergency	2	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	10
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	3	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	9
Rules Revision	0	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
Referees	1	0	5	2	1	1	0	0	10

International	1	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	7
Spread of the Game	2	0	6	2	1	0	0	0	11
1920 – 1921									
Protests & Appeals & Reinstatements	1	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	7
Finance	1	0	4	2	0	0	1	0	8
Emergency	2	0	7	3	0	0	0	0	12
Senior League Clubs Protests & Appeals	2	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	8
Rules Revision	1	0	6	3	1	0	0	0	11
Referees	1	0	5	2	1	1	0	0	10
International	1	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	7

1 IFA Annual General Meetings 1910 – 1987, D/4196/U/1.

Appendix B – Leinster and Munster Delegate Attendance Record at IFA Council and Sub-Committee Meetings 1910 – 1921¹

1909 – 1910	
IFA Council Meetings – 10 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	<i>Meetings Attended</i>
W. Cleary	6
T. Farrell	6
P.H. Stewart	2
Wm. Fitzsimons	7
H. Wigoder	6
W.H. Taylor	2
L.C. Sheridan	2
G.B. McErlean	2
J.F. Bridgeman	1
<i>Munster</i>	
T. McCann	10
Rev. R.N. Ruttle	5
W.B. Smith	1
Finance Committee – 8 Meetings Held	
<i>Munster</i>	
T. McCann	6
International Committee – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
Wm. Fitzsimons	4
1910 – 1911	
IFA Council Meetings – 6 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	5
Wm. Fitzsimons	5

W. Cleary	3
L.C. Sheridan	3
W.H. Taylor	2
G.B. McErlean	2
T. Farrell	1
H. Wigoder	1
J.F. Bridgeman	0
C.C. Robertson	0
<i>Munster</i>	
T. McCann	6
Lieut. & Qr. Master E.A. Parker	2
W.B. Smith	1
Rev. R.N. Ruttle	1
Protest and Appeals – 20 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
L.C. Sheridan	0
Finance – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	0
<i>Munster</i>	
T. McCann	4
International – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
Wm. Fitzsimons	4
1911 – 1912	
IFA Council Meetings – 7 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	3
Wm. Fitzsimons	4
T. Collins	4

L.C. Sheridan	2
T.B. Keogh	2
G.B. McErlean	1
W. Cleary	2
J.F. Bridgeman	2
C.C. Robertson	0
<i>Munster</i>	
T. McCann	1
Rev. R.N. Ruttle	4
Lieut. & Qr. Master E.A. Parker	3
Protests and Appeals – 14 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
L.C. Sheridan	3
Finance – 3 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	0
Emergency – 16 Meetings Held	
<i>Munster</i>	
Rev. Ruttle	12
International – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
Wm. Fitzsimons	4
Referees – 1 Meeting Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	0
<i>Munster</i>	
Rev. Ruttle	0
Rules Revision – 7 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
Wm. Fitzsimons	3
<i>Munster</i>	
Rev. Ruttle	2

1912 – 1913	
IFA Council Meetings – 8 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	1
Wm. Fitzsimons	7
R.W. Neville	4
L.C. Sheridan	4
T.B. Keogh	1
G.B. McErlean	1
A. Donnelly	3
J.F. Bridgeman	2
D. Mulcahy	2
<i>Munster</i>	
Rev. R.N. Ruttle	3
H. Wigoder	3
Protests and Appeals And Reinstatements – 12 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
L.C. Sheridan	0
International – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
L.C. Sheridan	2
Advisory – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
Wm. Fitzsimons	1
1913 – 1914	
IFA Council Meetings – 6 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.W. Neville	6

R.E.T. Richey	3
Sergt. McLean	3
L.C. Sheridan	2
J.B.M. Wilson	2
Wm. Fitzsimons	2
T. Collins	2
T.J. Murray	2
P.H. Stewart	1
D. Mulcahy	1
<i>Munster</i>	
H. Wigoder	5
Rev. R.N. Ruttle	3
J. McAnerney	5
Protests and Appeals and Reinstatements – 11 Meetings Held	
<i>Munster</i>	
J. McAnerney	6
Finance – 7 Meetings Held	
<i>Munster</i>	
H. Wigoder	3
Emergency – 16 Meetings Held	
<i>Munster</i>	
International – 5 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
Wm. Fitzsimons	2
1914 – 1915	
IFA Council Meetings – 5 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	5
R.E.T. Richey	3
L.C. Sheridan	3
J.T. Murray	2

P.H. Stewart	2
T. Collins	2
Wm. Fitzsimons	1
J.M.B. Wilson	1
G. McLean	1
R.W. Neville	1
<i>Munster</i>	
J. McAnerney	2
Rev. R.N. Ruttle	1
Protests and Appeals and Reinstatements – 12 Meetings Held	
<i>Munster</i>	
J. McAnerney	1
1915 – 1916	
IFA Council Meetings – 3 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.E.T. Richey	2
T.J. Murray	2
H. Wigoder	1
P.H. Stewart	0
L.C. Sheridan	0
T. Collins	0
R.R. Stewart	0
Protests and Appeals and Reinstatements – 6 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
T.J. Murray	2
1916 – 1917	
IFA Council Meetings – 3 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.R. Stewart	2

T. Collins	2
H. Wigoder	2
R.E.T. Richey	2
T.J. Murray	2
P.H. Stewart	0
L.C. Sheridan	0
Protests and Appeals and Reinstatements – 13 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
T.J. Murray	3
Finance – 2 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.E.T. Richey	0
Emergency – 13 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
T. Collins	2
Senior League Clubs' Protest and Appeals – 9 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.R. Stewart	4
1917 – 1918	
IFA Council Meetings – 6 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	3
R.E.T. Richey	4
P.H. Stewart	3
R.R. Stewart	3
T.J. Murray	1
R.A. Duff	1
T. Collins	1
L.C. Sheridan	0
Protests and Appeals and Reinstatements – 13 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	

T.J. Murray	2
Finance – 2 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.E.T. Richey	0
Emergency – 11 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.R. Stewart	2
Senior League Clubs' Protest and Appeals – 5 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.R. Stewart	4
Referees – 2 Meeting Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	0
1918 – 1919	
IFA Council Meetings – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	1
R.E.T. Richey	2
P.H. Stewart	0
R.R. Stewart	3
J. Walsh	0
J.F. Harrison	1
L.C. Sheridan	0
Finance – 5 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.E.T. Richey	1
Emergency – 11 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.R. Stewart	3
J. Walsh	2
Senior League Clubs' Protest and Appeals – 10 Meetings Held	

<i>Leinster</i>	
R.R. Stewart	3
J. Walsh	1
International – 4 Meeting Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
L.C. Sheridan	1
1919 – 1920	
IFA Council Meetings – 7 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	6
R.E.T. Richey	5
P.H. Stewart	3
R.R. Stewart	2
J. Walsh	3
J.S. Smurthwaite	3
J.F. Harrison	3
L.C. Sheridan	3
G.P. Fleming	0
J. McDonald	0
Protests and Appeals and Reinstatements – 17 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	9
Finance – 8 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.E.T. Richey	2
Emergency – 7 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
G.P. Fleming	0
J. Walsh	1
Senior League Clubs' Protest and Appeals – 15 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	

R.R. Stewart	3
J. Walsh	5
G.P. Fleming	0
Referees – 1 Meeting Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	0
International – 10 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	4
Spread of the Game – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.R. Stewart	1
H. Wigoder	1
1920 – 1921	
IFA Council Meetings – 3 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	3
R.E.T. Richey	2
P.H. Stewart	1
G.P. Fleming	0
J. Walsh	1
J.S. Smurthwaite	1
J.F. Harrison	1
L.C. Sheridan	2
Protests and Appeals and Reinstatements – 13 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	3
Finance – 4 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
R.E.T. Richey	0
Emergency – 8 Meetings Held	

<i>Leinster</i>	
G.P. Fleming	0
J. Walsh	0
Senior League Clubs' Protest and Appeals – 10 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
J. Walsh	4
G.P. Fleming	0
Rules Revision – 1 Meeting Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
G.P. Fleming	0
Referees – 1 Meeting Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
H. Wigoder	0
International – 10 Meetings Held	
<i>Leinster</i>	
P.H. Stewart	7

1 IFA Annual General Meetings 1910 – 1987, D/4196/U/1.

**Appendix C – Number of Irish International Caps Based on Location of Player’s Club – 1882
– 1921¹**

Year	Leinster	Ulster	Overseas	Total
1882	0	22	0	22
1883	0	22	0	22
1884	0	32	1	33
1885	6	27	0	33
1886	3	30	0	33
1887	0	33	0	33
1888	0	33	0	33
1889	2	31	0	33
1890	0	33	0	33
1891	1	32	0	33
1892	0	33	0	33
1893	0	33	0	33
1894	0	33	0	33
1895	2	31	0	33
1896	3	30	0	33
1897	0	33	0	33
1898	0	33	0	33
1899	3	25	5	33
1900	3	25	5	33
1901	5	25	3	33
1902	2	21	10	33
1903	1	19	13	33
1904	2	18	13	33
1905	2	13	18	33
1906	5	21	7	33
1907	5	20	8	33
1908	5	16	12	33
1909	3	10	20	33
1910	2	11	20	33
1911	5	7	21	33

1912	4	8	21	33
1913	6	6	21	33
1914	4	9	20	33
1919	0	6	5	11
1920	1	10	22	33
1921	0	7	26	33
Overall Total	75	798	271	1,144

1 For composition of Irish teams, see *Belfast Newsletter*, *Sport*, *The Irish Independent*, *Freeman's Journal*, *The Irish Times*, IFA International Minutes – 1909 – 1966, D/4196/D/1, Brodie, *100 Years of Irish Football* and *Northern Ireland Footballing Greats*, available from <http://nifootball.blogspot.ie/>